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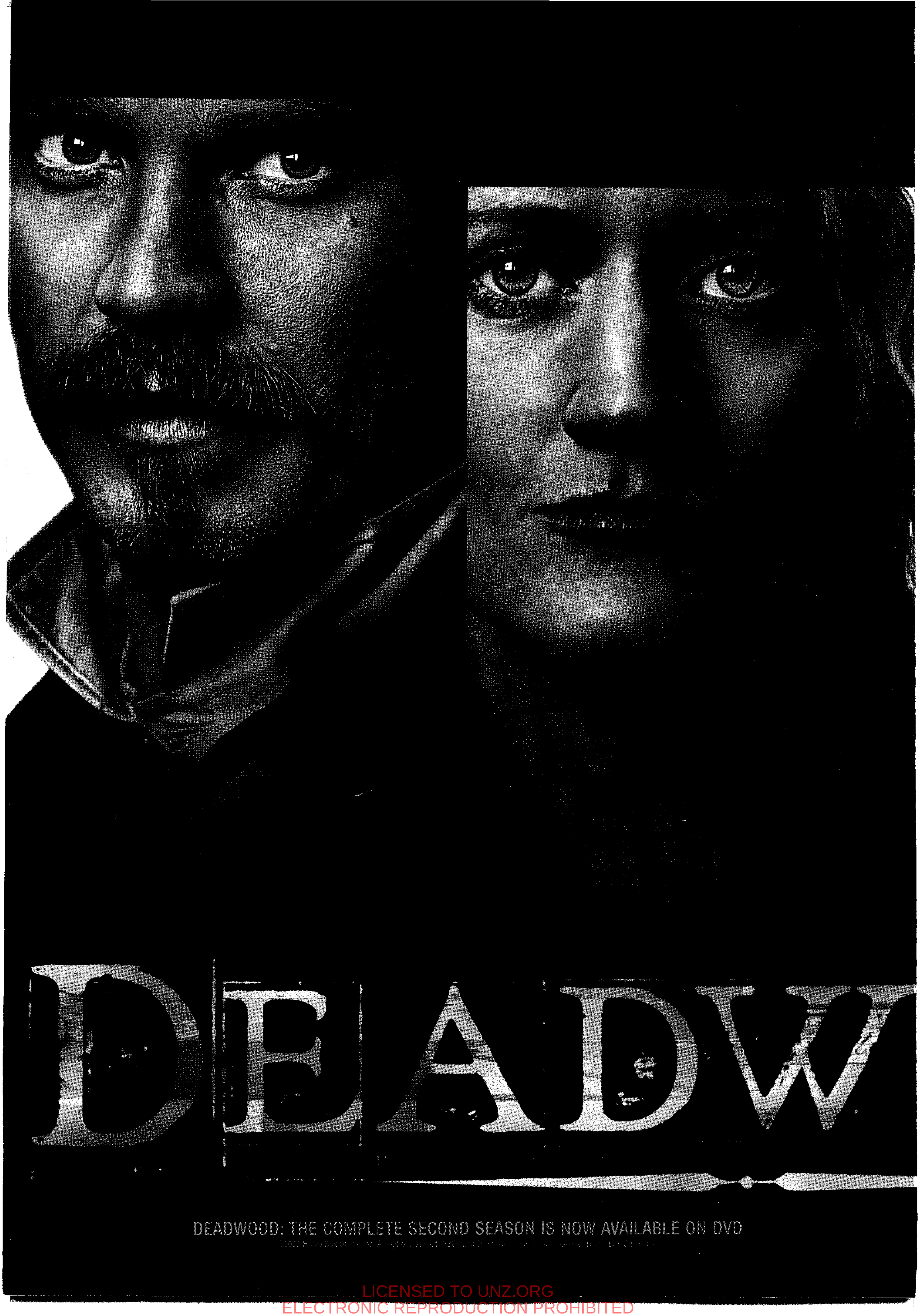
JUNE 12, 2006



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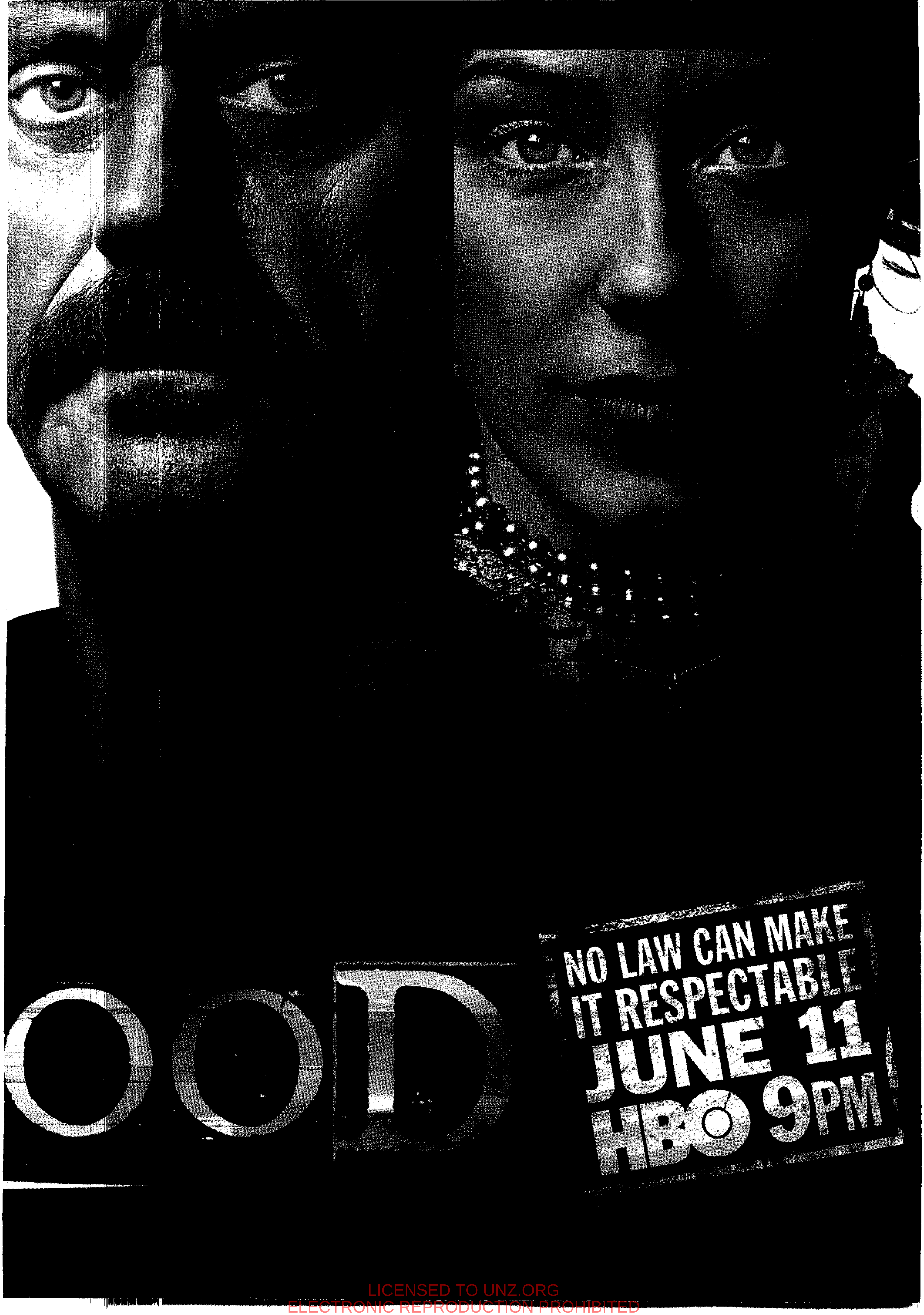
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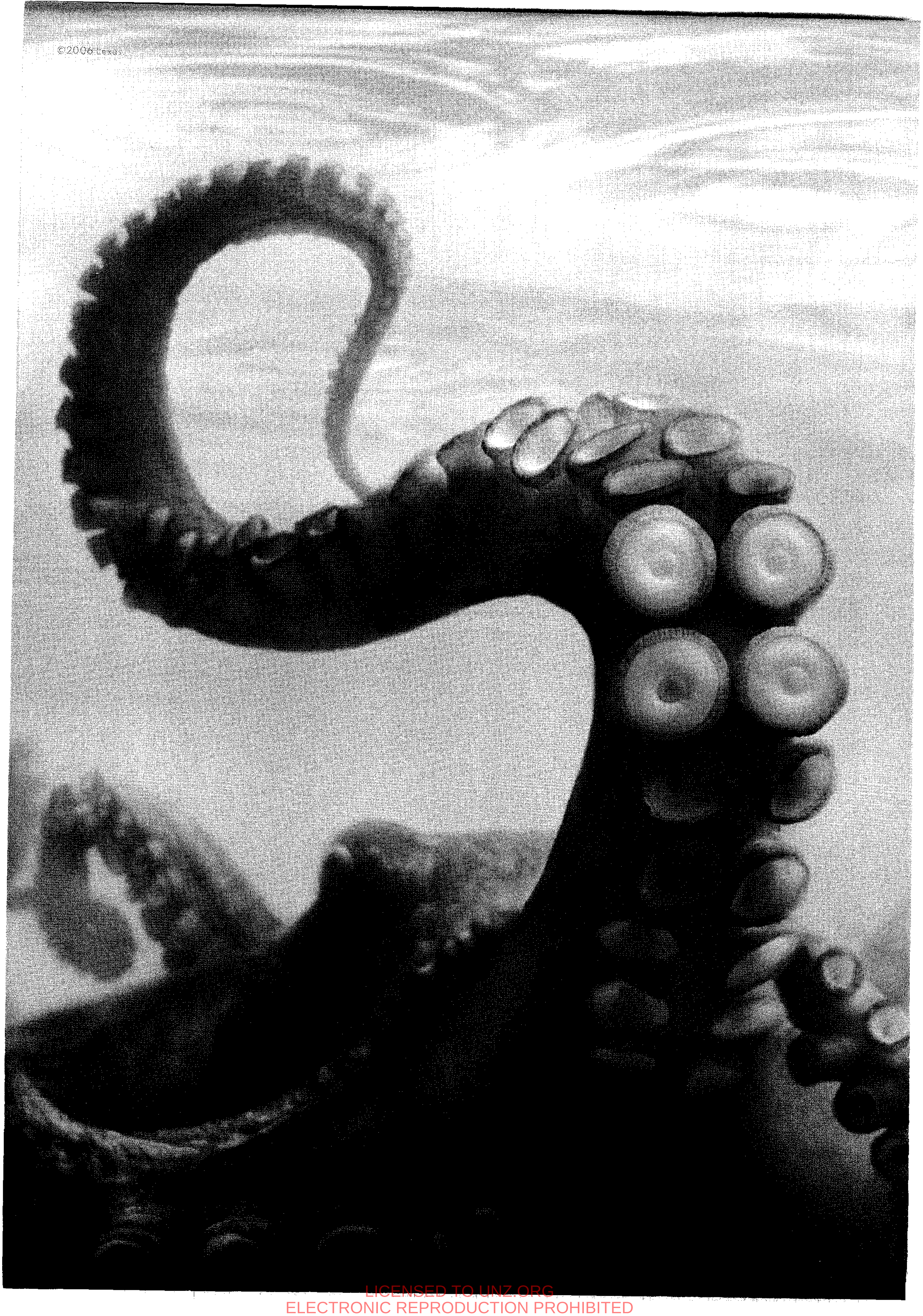

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THE NEW YORKER
SUMMER FICTION: LIFE DURING WARTIME

JUNE 12, 2006

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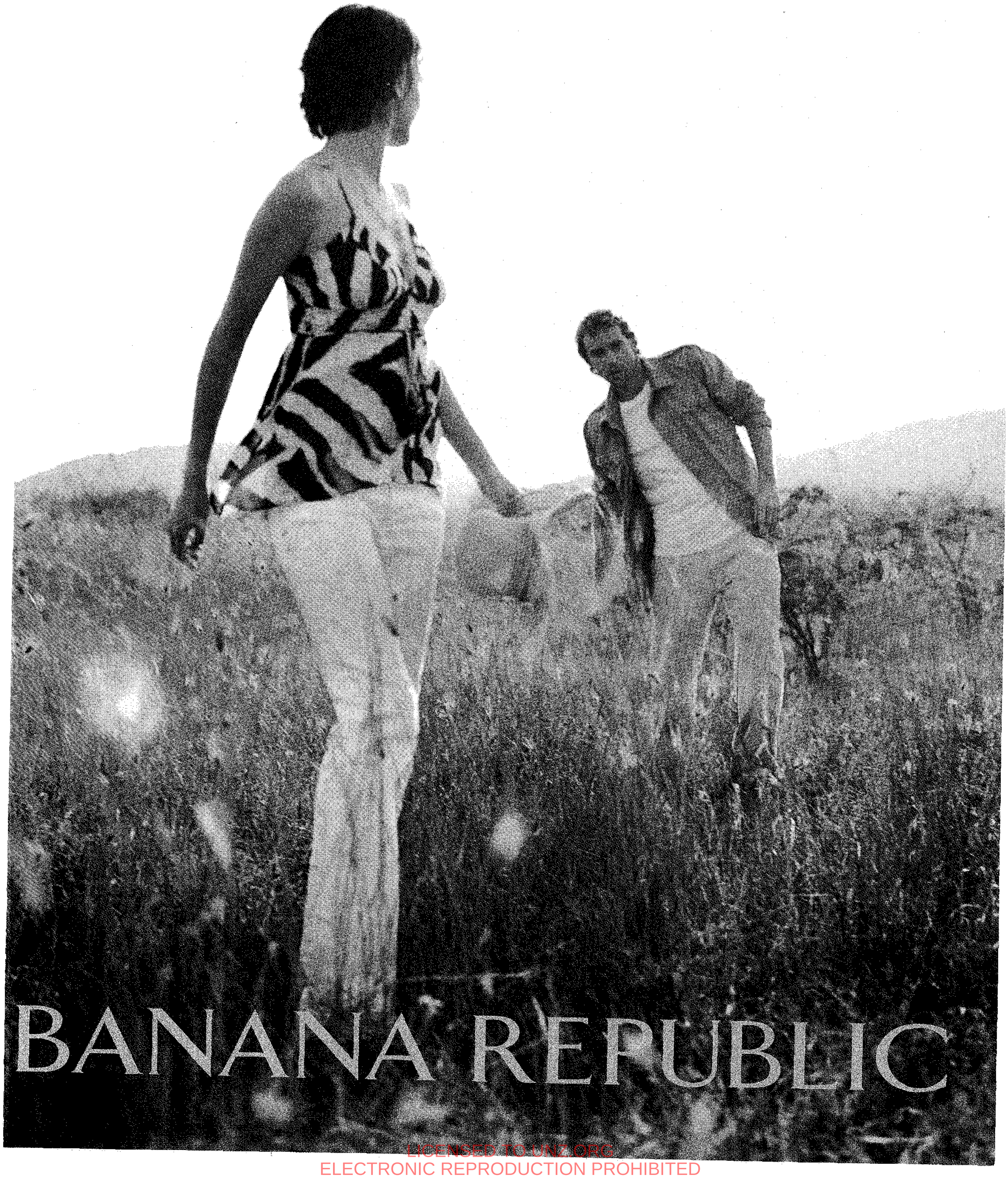
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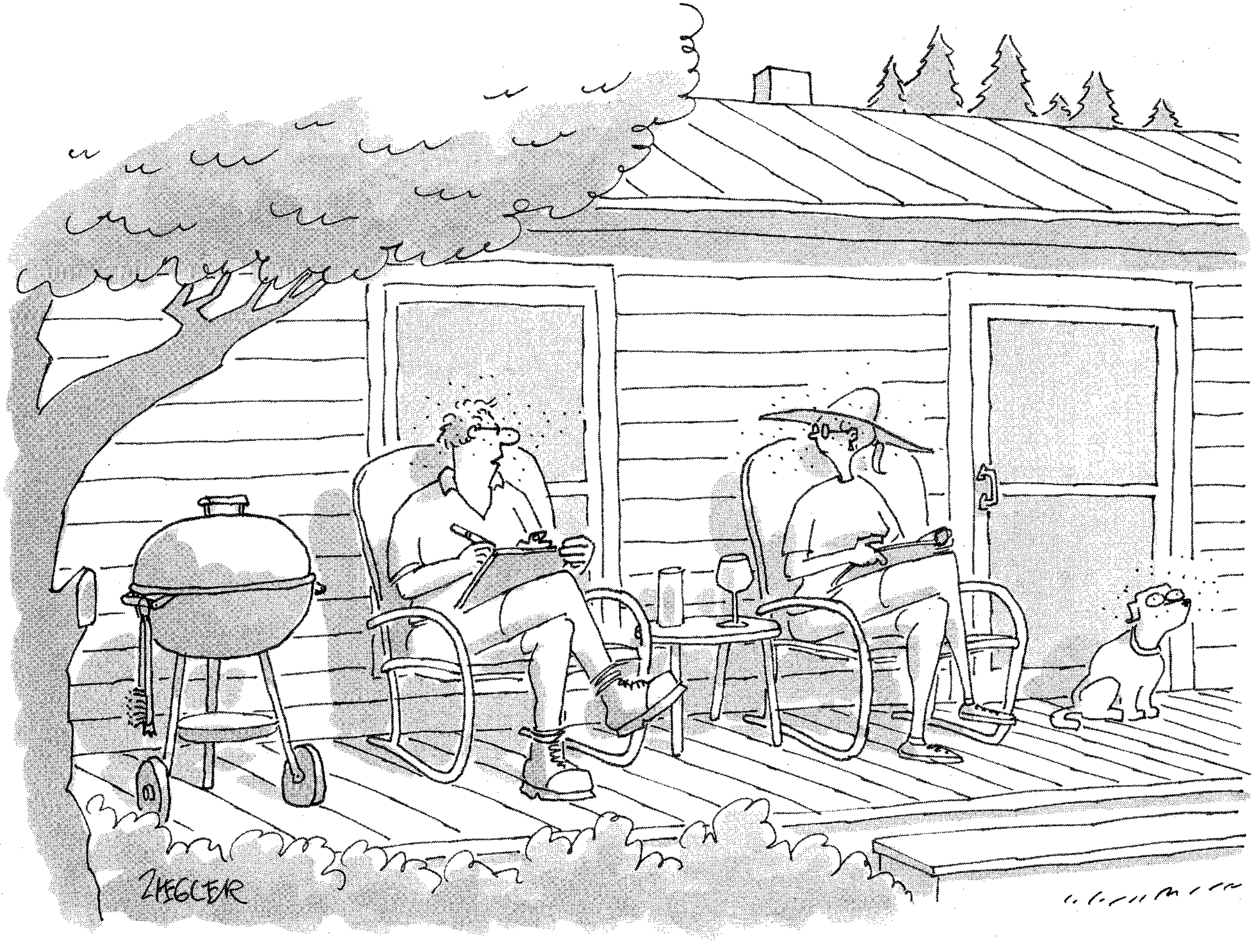
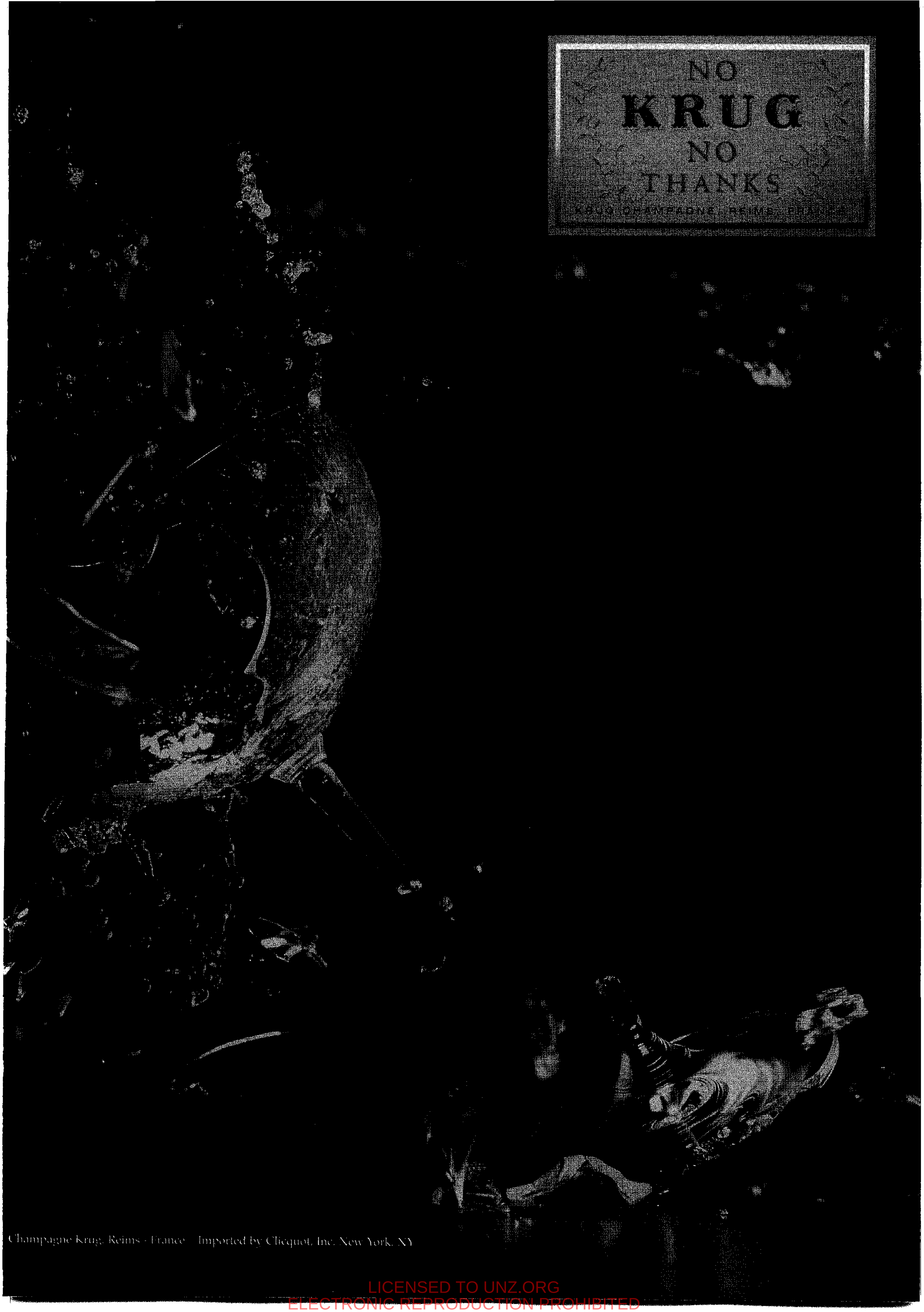


"Since coming up here for the summer, I find myself writing an awful lot about gnats."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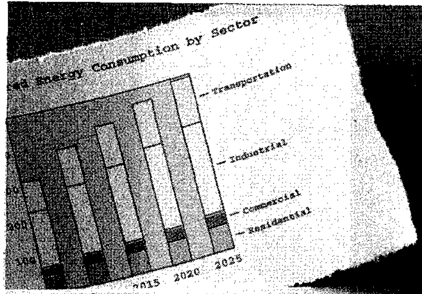

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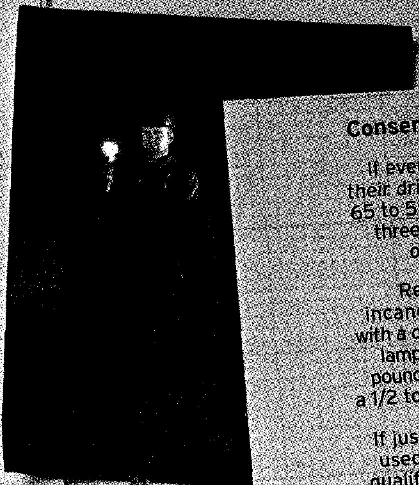

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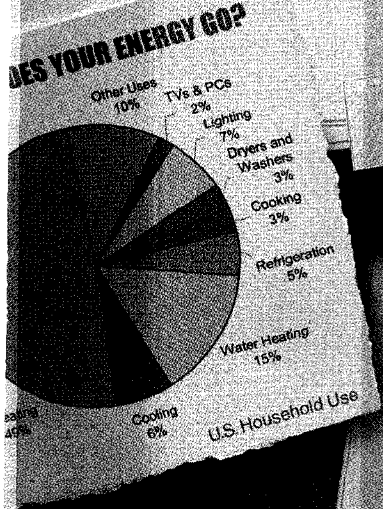

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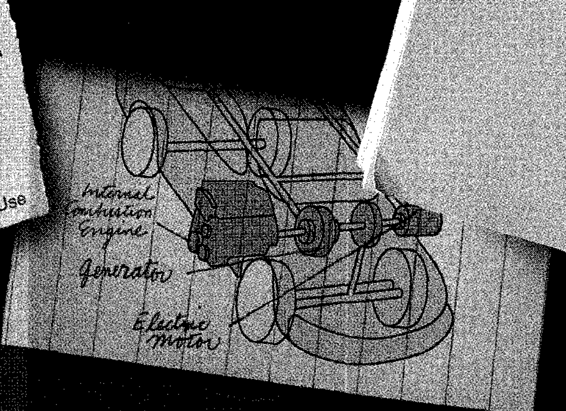


CONTRIBUTORS

Vasily Grossman ("In Kislovodsk," p. 58), who died in 1964, is the author of "Life and Fate" and "A Writer at War."

Neil Sheehan (The Talk of the Town, p. 50) won a Pulitzer Prize and a National Book Award for "A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam."

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie ("Sierra Leone, 1997," p. 72) will publish her second novel, "Half of a Yellow Sun," in September.

Robert Stone (The Talk of the Town, p. 52) has a memoir, "Prime Green: Remembering the Sixties," coming out in January.

Uwem Akpan ("My Parents' Bedroom," p. 130) graduated from the University of Michigan's M.F.A. program last month.

Tony D'Souza ("Ivory Coast, 2000," p. 102) published his first novel, "Whiteman," in April.

Lorenzo Mattotti (Illustrations, pp. 112, 117, 120, 126) has been a regular contributor since 1993.

Samuel Hynes ("Meeting E.P.," p. 74) is the author of two memoirs, "Flights of Passage" and "The Growing Seasons: An American Boyhood Before the War."

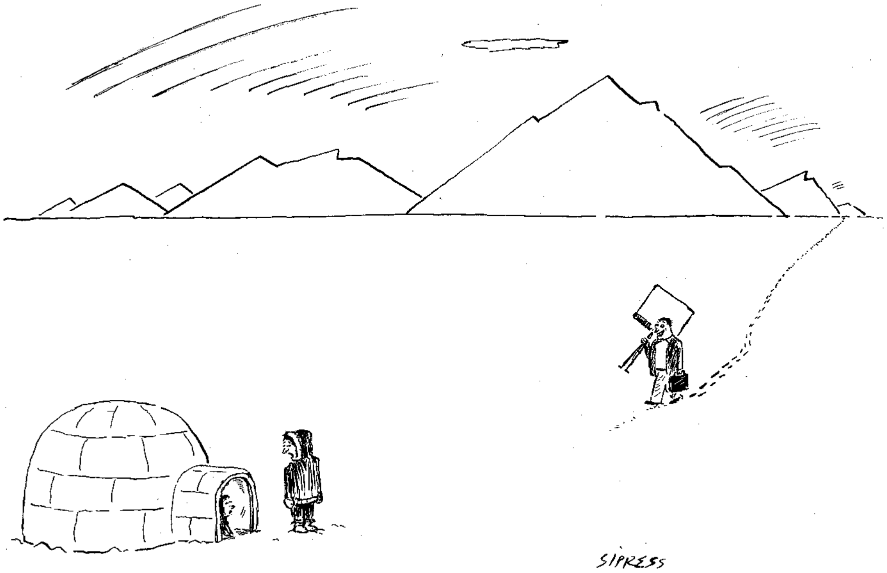
Italo Calvino ("Waiting for Death in a Hotel," p. 104) wrote this story when he was twenty-two. He died in 1985, at the age of sixty-one. A collection of his letters will be published in 2008.

Aleksandar Hemon ("Yugoslavia, 1991," p. 125) is the author of two works of fiction, "The Question of Bruno" and "Nowhere Man."

Roger Angell (The Talk of the Town, p. 54) has just published "Let Me Finish," a memoir.

Wendell Steavenson ("Iraq, 2004," p. 135) is currently living in Beirut. Her book "Stories I Stole" is an account of two years that she spent in the former Soviet republic of Georgia.

Elizabeth Kolbert (Books, p. 146) is the author of "Field Notes from a Catastrophe: Man, Nature, and Climate Change," which came out in April. ♦



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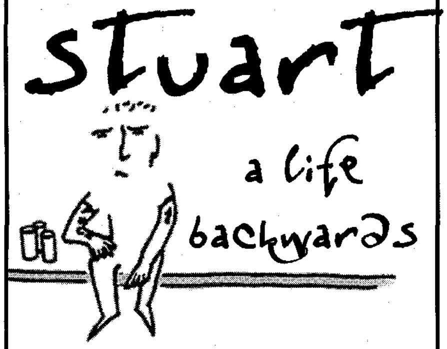

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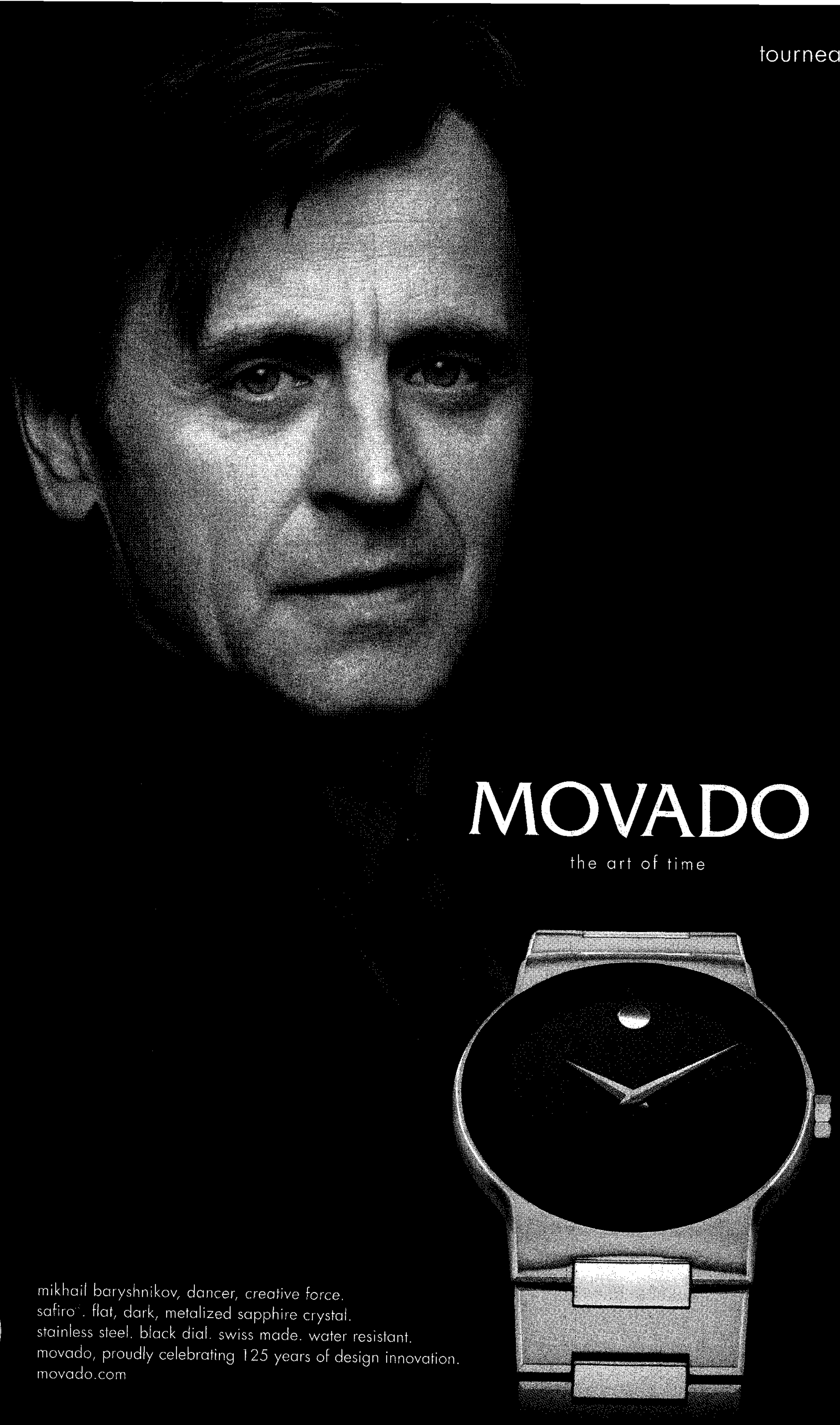

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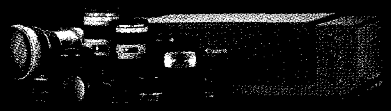

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THE MAIL

GOING ORGANIC

Steven Shapin is correct in saying that a mass shift to organic farming would be impractical and take years, as farmers, agricultural-research institutions, and farm extension offices adjusted (A Critic at Large, May 15th). But it wouldn't necessarily mean a drop in our food supply, as critics of organic farming have speculated. Two recent studies—one by a team of ecologists at the University of Michigan and one by a team of European economists and sociologists—estimated the impact that such a conversion would have on global food output, and both teams found, independently, that the supply would increase, not decrease, dramatically. The yield gap between conventional and organic crops tends to be widest in wealthy nations, where farmers use copious amounts of synthetic fertilizer and pesticides. But organic farming tends to raise yields in poorer nations like Kenya, India, and Guatemala. Because organic farms are inherently more diverse and less dependent on outside intervention, they are less vulnerable to climate change, emerging crop diseases, and rising oil prices; and techniques like composting, green manuring, and biological pest control may be the best way to boost production and reduce hunger.

Brian Halweil
Senior Researcher
Worldwatch Institute
Sag Harbor, N.Y.

Shapin's claim that "genetically modified, industrially produced monocultural corn is what feeds the victims of an African famine" is a dangerously literal view of a much more complicated truth. While such food may indeed arrive at refugee camps across Africa, the refugees are almost always the victims of land and/or resource (water, oil) disputes exacerbated by the West's increasing need for fuel to help produce their genetically modified crops. In addition, poor environmental policies, corrupt local governments, careless international trade policies, and climate change all conspire to create cyclical famines in Africa—a situation that would be greatly alleviated by a return to local, ecologically sound farming practices. A model now exists that shows how such practices can restore the food security and the democratic voice of a population. Professor Wangari Maathai, the Kenyan Nobel Peace Prize winner, and her Green Belt Movement have rehabilitated vast areas of barren, eroded land and made them into rich, rain-friendly arable farms, plots, and tiny, but highly productive, back-yard gardens. All crops are "organic" in the true sense of the word, and the cycle of poverty, environmental degradation, fighting over resources, and corrupt governance is broken.

Alexandra Fuller
Wilson, Wyo.

REASSESSING HARPER LEE

Thomas Mallon, in his review of a new biography of Harper Lee, does a great disservice to her novel (Books, May 29th). "To Kill a Mockingbird" may have a dangling modifier or two, but Mallon misses the point. It is easy, forty-six years later, to criticize the novel's moral simplicity, but its morality is simple only if you agree with it, which the vast majority of white Southerners of Lee's generation did not. In 1960, segregation was legal and in force in schools and public accommodations in towns throughout the South, and the virtue of white Southern women of Harper Lee's age and social position was the very redoubt that segregation was established to defend. Mallon forgets how daring it was for Lee to take a stand against this system.

Michael Bourne
Brooklyn, N.Y.

SLAVES IN THE REVOLUTION

In her recent essay, Jill Lepore makes several statements about runaway slaves during the American Revolution which are subject to debate (A Critic at Large,

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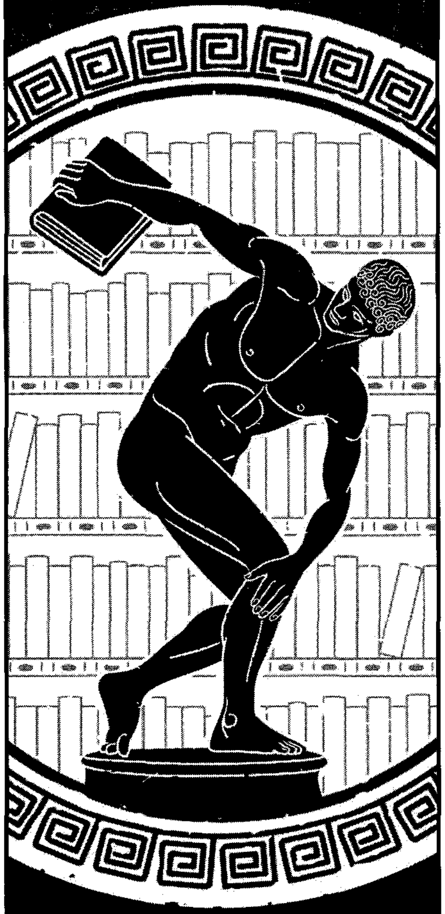

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May 8th). While it is true that no one knows exactly how many enslaved men and women fled to the British Army during the war, the estimate that she cites—between eighty thousand and a hundred thousand—no longer seems credible in the light of a recent *William and Mary Quarterly* essay by Cassandra Pybus, whose "Epic Journeys of Freedom" features in Lepore's piece. Pybus and others, including the historians Allan Kulikoff and Ira Berlin, endorse numbers in the twenty-to-twenty-five-thousand range. Nor is there reliable evidence that Dunmore's Ethiopian Regiment wore the words "Liberty to Slaves" on their "uniforms"; given the deprivations that everyone in Dunmore's fleet was forced to endure, it's not clear that they had uniforms at all. Finally, if there is any basis for the claim that several slaves had their fingers chopped off while hanging on to the side of a British ship leaving Charleston Harbor, I suspect that it has roots in patriot propaganda. The desire for more textured, "focussed" black figures from this period is admirable, but it should not compromise a commitment to rigorous interrogation of sources.

Jim David
Williamsburg, Va.

AN ATHLETE'S WORTH

Malcolm Gladwell, in reviewing "The Wages of Wins," in which the economists David J. Berri, Martin B. Schmidt, and Stacey L. Brook have devised an algorithm to assess the "true value of a basketball player," fails to address the real complexity involved in determining a player's contribution to a team (Books, May 29th). Basketball games are won by the team scoring the most points, and all other statistics—rebounds, assists, blocks, field-goal percentage—are valuable only insofar as they lead to points for one's team or prevent one's opponent from scoring. But it's impossible to know how well, or poorly, a player might perform when given different teammates, with different skills. To use an algorithm to determine that, in the case of Allen Iverson, "the Philadelphia 76ers would be better off without him" seems absurd. Surely each individual team knows its utility function better than anyone else, and to ignore the possibility that teams have different styles, and thus different needs, overlooks the essential dynamic that comes into play when smart teams evaluate players.

Paul Minard
Ottawa, Ontario

CONSERVING FUEL

Dorothy Wickenden's proposal for a gas tax to help break our country's addiction to oil is on the right track, but greater fuel efficiency, as she notes, is even more important (Comment, May 22nd). If we assume that the average driver logs twelve thousand miles a year at twenty miles per gallon, requiring six hundred gallons of gas, increasing the gas tax by a dollar per gallon would cost the driver only six hundred dollars for the year, or less than two dollars a day. Increasing the tax might encourage some drivers to buy more fuel-efficient cars in the future, but why not make gas-guzzling autos obsolete by legislating much higher average fuel-efficiency requirements for all new cars?

Robert M. Coquillette
Lexington, Mass.

MOVIE VALUES

As a moviegoing Christian, I am increasingly weary of the furor raised by my faithful compatriots over "The Da Vinci Code," as Peter J. Boyer chronicles it ("Hollywood Heresy," May 22nd). One simple fact continues to be overlooked by both the religious naysayers and the studios: many Christians, like me, are more concerned with a movie's entertainment value than with its moral platitudes. But since studios apparently spend their money on publicists instead of ideas, I'm afraid that the majority of those of us in the audience will be left with only our prayers.

Ralph Gervasio
Los Angeles, Calif.

•

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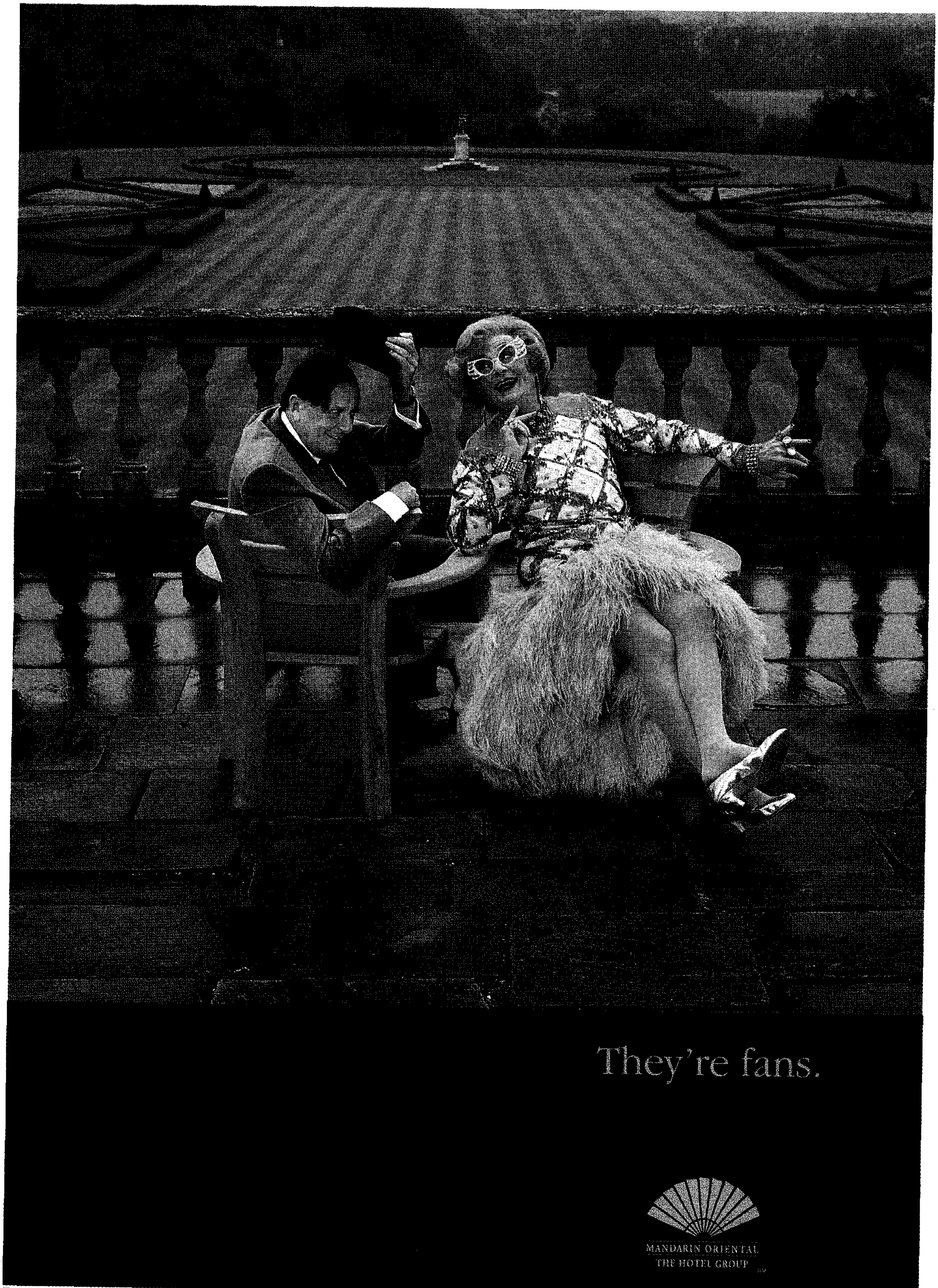
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Aspiring designers at a spring open call for the upcoming season of "Project Runway." Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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11	12	13	7	8	9	10

THIS WEEK

NIGHT LIFE
SONS OF INVENTION

Thirteen years have passed since Frank Zappa died, and recently his son Dweezil decided that it was time to return to the road for a celebration of the vast Zappa oeuvre. Dweezil and his brother, Ahmet, recruited some of their father's former associates—including the guitarist Steve Vai, the drummer Terry Bozzio, and the singer and saxophonist Napoleon Murphy Brock—for a tour. It comes to the Beacon Theatre this week. (See page 20.)

ART
WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Anthony Huberman and Paul Pfeiffer curated "Grey Flags," the Sculpture Center's new group show. In this case, not all the members of the group have an equal relationship to the show: one participant, Seth Price, hijacked and reworked the title and press copy. Piero Golia, Claire Fontaine, and Mario Ybarra, Jr., are among the other artists. (See page 27.)

DANCE
VIVA FLAMENCO

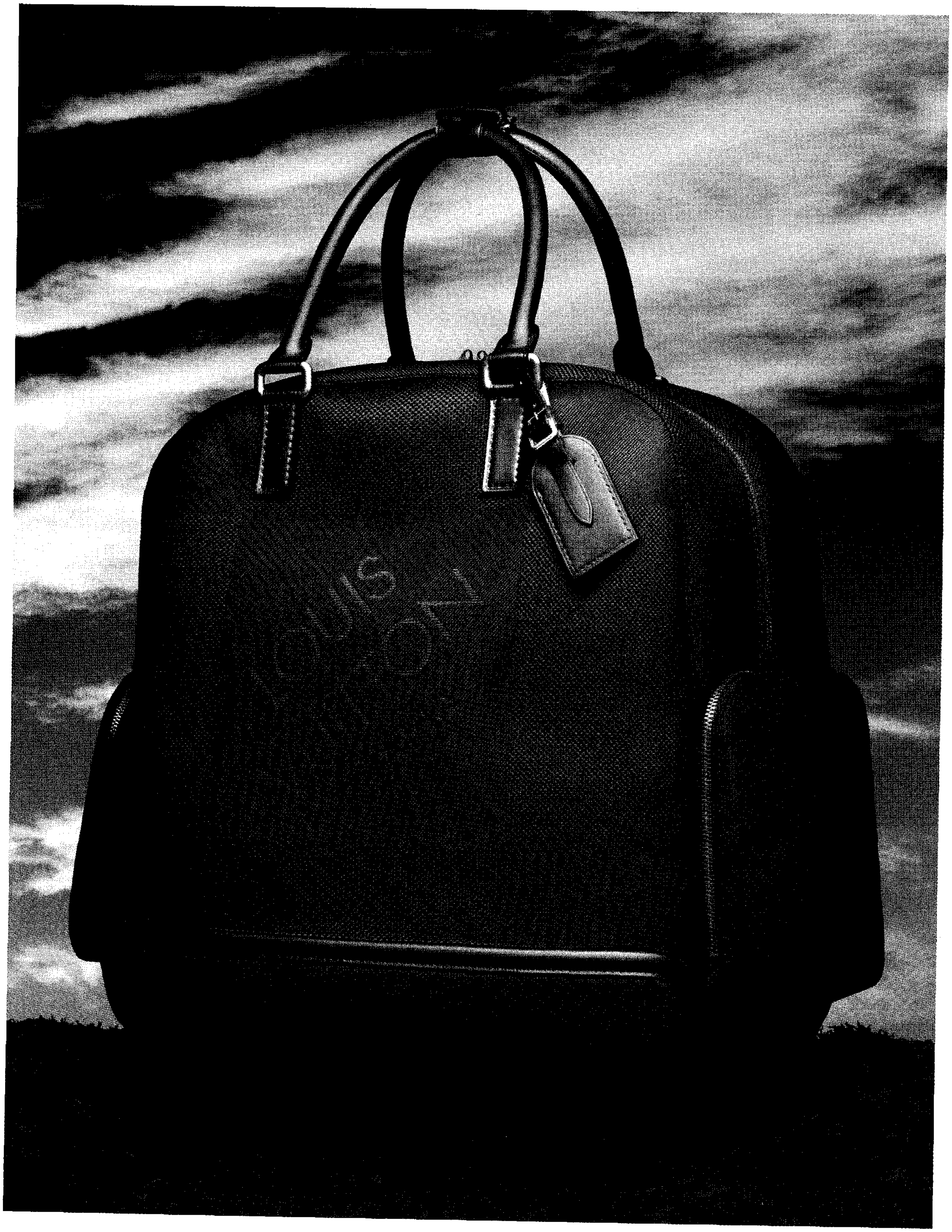
The mesmerizing Soledad Barrio returns to Theatre 80 with her intimate, back-to-basics flamenco group, Noche Flamenca. This is the real thing, without flashy lights or costumes or deafening amplification—that's right, no mikes—just *bulerías*, *soleares*, *alegrías*, virtuoso guitar playing, and Barrio's flaming *siguiriya*. (See page 31.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
ALL WOUND UP

"Rewind," a concert series directed by Paul Haas, offers a début program at the Angel Orensanz Center in which classics by Stravinsky, Schoenberg, and Purcell are linked by electroacoustic interludes. (See page 32.)

MOVIES
LONDON CALLING

The nearly complete retrospective of the films of Michelangelo Antonioni at BAM opens with a weeklong run of "Blow-Up," his swinging-England hit from 1966, which introduced the world to Vanessa Redgrave and captured the media madness that rock music and mod fashion both spawned and fed on. It took the director fifteen years to find his way back to Italy. (See page 38.)



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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
IN BLACK AND WHITE

The critic Darryl Pinckney once remarked that Steven Spielberg's film adaptation of Alice Walker's Pulitzer Prize-winning 1982 novel, "The Color Purple," might as well be "about a bunch of dancing eggplants" for all it had to say about black American life, and Broadway reviewers pretty much thought the same about the musical. Yet the current show, co-produced by Oprah, has gone on to garner eleven Tony nominations, making it a hit with some members of a public who may have never read Walker's paean to black female triumph over oppression. Still, the show's Tony nods—the awards are on CBS on June 11th—should return attention to other black American playwrights, such as Adrienne Kennedy, who have written so effectively about black women. In the book "Mom How Did You Meet the Beatles?," the author of such works as "A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White" is interviewed by her son Adam and offers rare insight into what it's like to be a black artist in a largely uncomprehending white world that prefers tap dancing to rigorous self-exploration.

—*Hilton Als*

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

ARABIAN NIGHT
Trip Cullman directs this urban fairy tale by Roland Schimmelpfennig, in which five strangers come together on a summer evening. In previews. Opens June 12. (East 13th Street Theatre, 136 E. 13th St. 212-279-4200.)

BIG SHOOT
Koffi Kwahulé's drama details the relationship between an interrogator and his suspect. Gabriella Maione directs. In previews. (Culture Project, 45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.)

BURLEIGH GRIME$
Wendie Malick and Mark Moses star in a new comedy by Roger Kirby, about a Wall Street up-and-comer. With music by David Yazbek. David Warren directs. In previews. Opens June 13. (New World Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE BUSY WORLD IS HUSHED
Jill Clayburgh stars in a new play by Keith Bunin, in which the buried past of a theologian is discovered. Mark Brokaw ("The Constant Wife") directs. In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

CRAZY FOR THE DOG
Christopher S. Boal wrote this drama, about a brother and sister with a volatile, entwined relationship. Preview on June 8. Opens June 9. (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 212-677-0060.)

ELVIS AND JULIET
The New York première of a new comedy by Mary Willard, about the crazy families of an engaged couple. Fred Willard stars. Opens June 7. (June Havoc, 312 W. 36th St. 212-868-4444.)

GETTING HOME
Anton Dudley's play, about the adventures of three Manhattan denizens, has its world première. In previews. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 212-246-4422.)

THE HOUSE IN TOWN
Richard Greenberg's new play examines the marriage of a couple living on New York City's Millionaires' Row in 1929. Doug Hughes directs. In previews. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

IN THE MATTER OF J. ROBERT OPPENHEIMER
Heinar Kipphardt wrote this docudrama based on the bomb-maker's attempts to clear himself of being considered a Communist sympathizer. Opens June 7. (Connelly, 220 E. 4th St. 212-868-4444.)

LUO SHEN (LEGEND OF THE RIVER LUO)
Yangtze Rep presents Joanna Chen's historic drama, in both Mandarin and English, which explores the exploits of a Chinese prime minister and his family. Previews begin June 8. Opens June 11. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave. 718-263-8829.)

MACBETH
The first offering of the Public Theatre's Shakespeare in the Park season stars Liev Schreiber in the title role. Moisés Kaufman directs. Previews begin June 13. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 212-539-8750.)

NERVE
Adam Szymkowicz's new dark comedy examines the relationship of a neurotic couple who meet on the Internet. Previews begin June 8. Opens June 12. (14th Street Y, 344 E. 14th St. 212-868-4444.)

NOTHING
Andrea Hart's adaptation of Henry Green's book, a satire about two capricious upper-class English families, is part of the "Brits Off Broadway" series. In previews. Opens June 11. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

PIG FARM
Roundabout Theatre Company's latest enterprise is a new comedy from the team behind "Urinetown," the writer Greg Kotis and the director John Rando, about pigs and sustainable agriculture. Previews begin June 9. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

SATELLITES
Michael Greif directs a new play by Diana Son, about an interracial couple who move into a gentrifying Brooklyn neighborhood. The ensemble cast includes Sandra Oh. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

SOME GIRL(S)
Maura Tierney, Eric McCormack, and Fran Drescher star in a new play by Neil LaBute, about a man who visits four former girlfriends before getting engaged. Directed by Jo Bonney. In previews. Opens June 8. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200.)

SPRING AWAKENING
Atlantic Theatre Company presents the world première of a new musical adapted from Frank Wedekind's novel about the secret lives of teen-agers. With music by Duncan Sheik and book and lyrics by Steven Sater. Michael Mayer directs. In previews. (336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

STOPPING TRAFFIC
The Vineyard premières a one-woman show written by and starring Mary Pat Gleason. Lonny Price directs. Opens June 7. (108 E. 15th St. 212-353-0303.)

SUSAN AND GOD
The Mint Theatre Company revives Rachel Crothers's 1937 play, about a newly religious socialite who attempts to convert those around her. In previews. (311 W. 43rd St. 212-315-0231.)

TREASON
Sallie Bingham's new play examines the life of Ezra Pound and five women who were important to him. Martin Platt directs. Previews begin June 8. (Perry Street Theatre, 31 Perry St. 212-868-4444.)

THE WATER'S EDGE
Kate Burton and Tony Goldwyn star in a new play by Theresa Rebeck, in which a woman and her children are paid an unwelcome visit by her ex-husband. Directed by Will Frears. In previews. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

NOW PLAYING

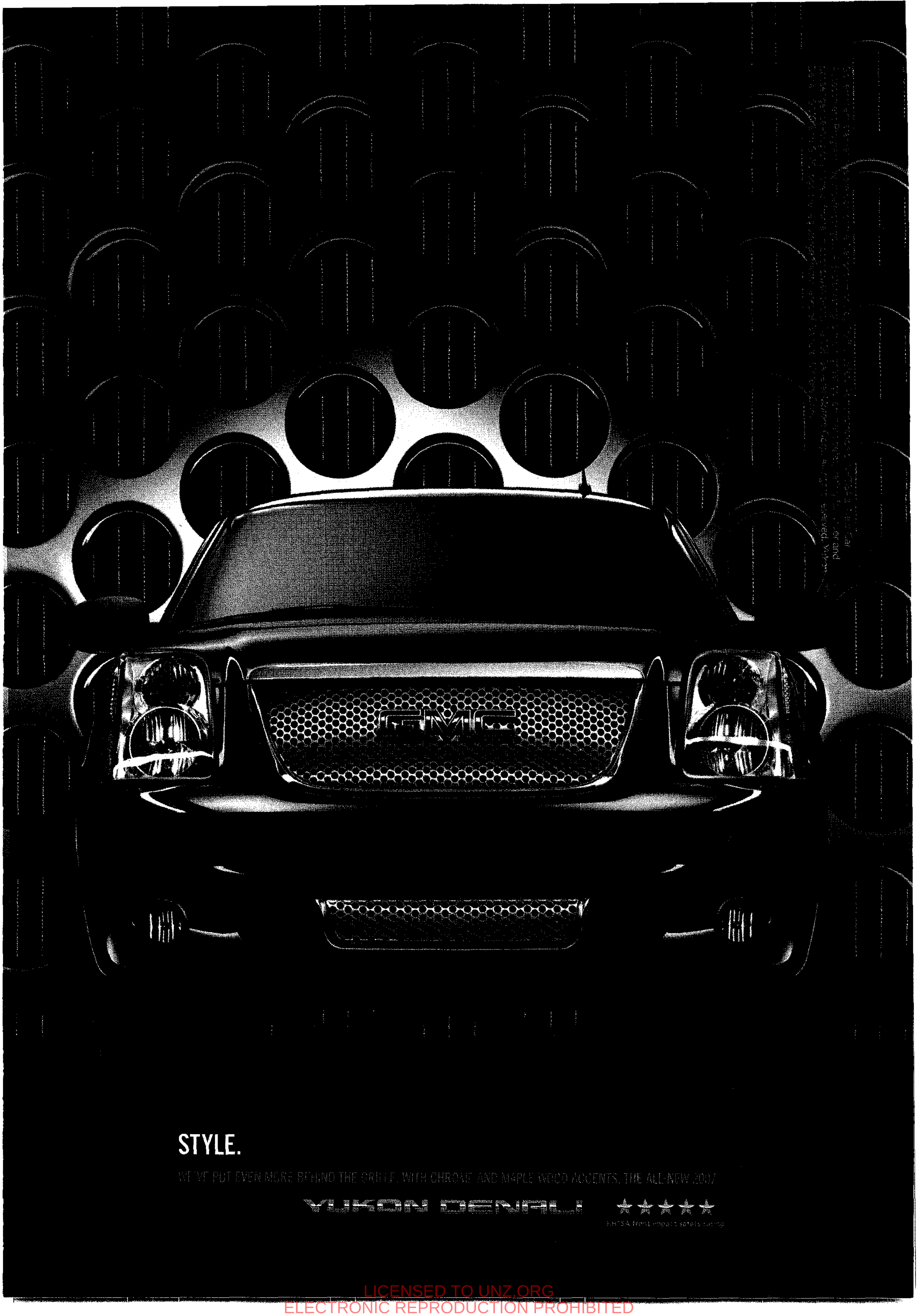
AWAKE AND SING!
Lincoln Center Theatre's revival of Clifford Odets's drama (back at the Belasco, where it débuted, in 1935) is a triumph. The director, Bartlett Sher, has brought together a virtuoso cast—including Zoë Wanamaker, Ben Gazzara, Mark Ruffalo, Lauren Ambrose, Pablo Schreiber, and Jonathan Hadary—who make Odets's dialogue crackle with all its well-wrought longing and verve. (111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

DARK YELLOW
This small, taut psychological thriller by Julia Jordan, set in the echoey expanses of American corn country, finds a bartender (Tina Benko) and a drifter (Elias Koteas) hanging out at her place late at night, telling each other the sort of little white lies that are common to incipient one-night stands. But as the two talk, flirt, and casually probe each other for facts, the lies grow deeper—and darker—and the possible murder of a young boy slowly comes into the picture. If Jordan indulges at this point in a little Philosophy 101 theorizing about the nature of truth and perception, it's used mainly as a springboard for a well-crafted tale of suspense. (Studio Dante, 257 W. 29th St. 212-868-4444.)

THE DROWSY CHAPERONE
This show, deftly directed and choreographed by Casey Nicholaw, happens to be the most original musical of the season. The minute the knowing, sad-sack narrator (Bob Martin, who also co-wrote the book with Don McKellar) puts on a record of Gable and Stein's "The Drowsy Chaperone"—"Remember?" he says of this entirely fictional 1928 musical comedy—his world is renovated. The musical cleverly deconstructs not just the folderol of twenties extravaganzas but also the frivolity of high camp. (Reviewed in our issue of 5/15/06.) (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-307-4100.)

ENSEMBLE STUDIO THEATRE'S MARATHON 2006
The twenty-eighth annual festival of new one-act plays includes eleven premières and work by David

N. ASCENCIOS


STYLE.
WE'VE PUT EVEN MORE BEHIND THE GRILLE. WITH CHROME AND MAPLE WOOD ACCENTS. THE ALL-NEW 2007
YUKON DENALI
★★★★★
NHTSA front impact safety rating
[illegible] Car Assessment Program [illegible] driver and passenger [illegible] Motors Corp. All rights reserved. Yukon [illegible] General Motors Corp.

Mamet, Stephen Adly Guirgis, Will Eno, and Amy Fox. (Ensemble Studio Theatre, 549 W. 52nd St. 212-352-3101.)

THE FIELD
The Irish Repertory Theatre presents John B. Keane's drama, about a farmer fighting for the land he has nurtured. Directed by Ciarán O'Reilly. (132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

THE HISTORY BOYS
In Alan Bennett's drama (London's National Theatre production, under the superb direction of Nicholas Hytner), Hector (Richard Griffiths, in a performance as huge as his girth) is a rambunctious general-studies teacher whose love of knowledge for its own sake is forced to take a back seat to the glib methods of Irwin (Stephen Campbell Moore), who is hired to get exam results. Bennett provides a subversive critique of the British expertise in bluffing: the Socratic dialogue is replaced with the technique of paradox, and eloquence trumps relevance. (5/1/06) (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE PORCH
A new comedy by Kari Floren, about three off-kilter guests at a bed-and-breakfast. (Altered Stages, 212 W. 29th St. 212-279-4200.)

SUMMERWORKS 2006
Clubbed Thumb's annual festival continues with Anne Washburn's drama "I Have Loved Strangers" and Erin Courtney's "Alice the Magnet." (Ohio, 66 Wooster St. 212-352-3101.)

TROUT STANLEY
On their thirtieth birthday, the Ducharme twins, Grace (Kelly McAndrew) and Sugar (Erika Rolfsrud), are still mourning the loss of their third sister, who died back in the birth canal, when a stubbly stranger (Warren Sulatycky), who may or may not be responsible for the disappearance of a local stripper-cum-Scrabble champion, knocks on the door of their kitsch-littered home in the Canadian wild. Like many real twins, Claudia Dey's characters have an idiosyncratic language all their own, composed of the same kind of loopy non sequiturs that characterize the plot; but the absurdity of the dialogue and the demented rivalry of the Ducharmes, while often funny, can't fully sustain the play for two acts. (Culture Project, 45 Bleecker St. 212-868-4444. Through June 11.)

WAITING FOR GODOT
Classical Theatre of Harlem mounts a deft restaging of Beckett's masterpiece, setting the play atop a hurricane-drenched shack, where two derelict souls straddle the sloping roof, awaiting their savior. In dripping suits and damp felt hats, Wendell Pierce, as Vladimir, and J. Kyle Manzay, as his saucer-eyed sidekick, Estragon, achieve a glorious comic chemistry. As water eases its way up to the rafters, the men are always on the verge of drowning. But they cling stubbornly to the surface, dripping like leaking faucets. The actors have a canny sense of timing, aided by Christopher McElroen's imaginative direction and Troy Hourie's aquatic set. (H.S.A. Theatre, 645 St. Nicholas Ave., near 141st St. 212-868-4444.)

THE WEDDING SINGER
The director John Rando brings a clever touch of irony to this energetic musical comedy adapted in the spirit of the 1998 movie, about Robbie (Stephen Lynch), a wedding singer who gets jilted at the altar by his metalhead fiancée (the fierce Felicia Finley), only to fall in love with a kindhearted waitress (Laura Benanti), who is engaged to a rich jerk. Over all, as enjoyable and nostalgic as a power walk at the mall. (Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

OUT OF TOWN

HELLO, DOLLY!
Tovah Feldshuh stars in the 1964 Tony Award-winning musical at the Paper Mill Playhouse. Previews begin June 7. Opens June 10. (Millburn, N.J. 973-376-4343.)

Also Playing

BILLY CONNOLLY LIVE!: 37 Arts, 450 W. 37th St. 212-307-4100. **BRIDGE & TUNNEL:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **THE COLOR PURPLE:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200. **COLUMBINUS:** New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200. Through June 11. **FAITH HEALER:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **HERAKLES VIA PHAEDRA:** La Mama Annex, 74A E. 4th St. 212-475-7710. Through June 11. **JERSEY BOYS:** August Wilson, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200. **THE LIEUTENANT OF INISHMORE:** Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE PAJAMA GAME:** American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300. **RED LIGHT WINTER:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **SHINING CITY:** Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **SWEENEY TODD:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **THE THREEPENNY OPERA:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300.

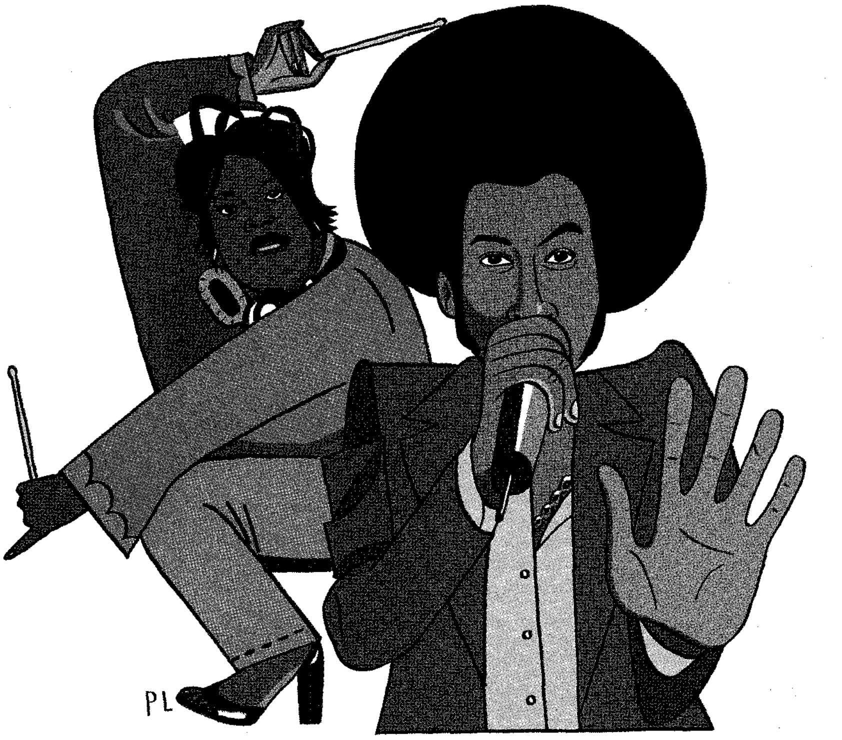
NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—June 7: The guitarist **Robert Lockwood, Jr.,** who recently turned ninety-one, is Robert Johnson's stepson, and he learned to play his instrument from the Master himself. He'll be joined by the Mississippi singer **David (Honeyboy) Edwards.** June 8-9: Soul Brother No. 1, **James Brown.** June 10: The local bluesman **Popa Chubby** celebrates the release of his new album, "Stealing the Devil's Guitar."

BEACON THEATRE
Broadway at 74th St. (212-307-7171)—June 12: Frank Zappa was one of rock's funniest and most prolific composers. Starting in the mid-sixties, he turned expectations upside down with complex compositions that incorporated everything from doo-wop to avant jazz. His sons, **Dweezil** and **Ahmet Zappa,** have put together an ensemble featuring folks from the old days, including **Steve Vai, Terry Bozzio, Napoleon Murphy Brock,** and others, and they are performing material from Zappa's massive back catalogue.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—June 8: The **Coup,** a Bay Area hip-hop group known for its uncompromisingly polemical lyrics, made news in 2001 for an unfortunate coincidence—the original cover of the group's album "Party Music" showed the lead vocalist, Boots, blowing up the World Trade Center with a detonator. Their new release, "Pick a Bigger Weapon," continues the leftist assault that began with their début, "Kill My Landlord," from 1993. Live, they up the ante both musically and politically, giving a spirited show and appearing with volunteers from Not Your Soldier, an anti-military-recruitment organization.



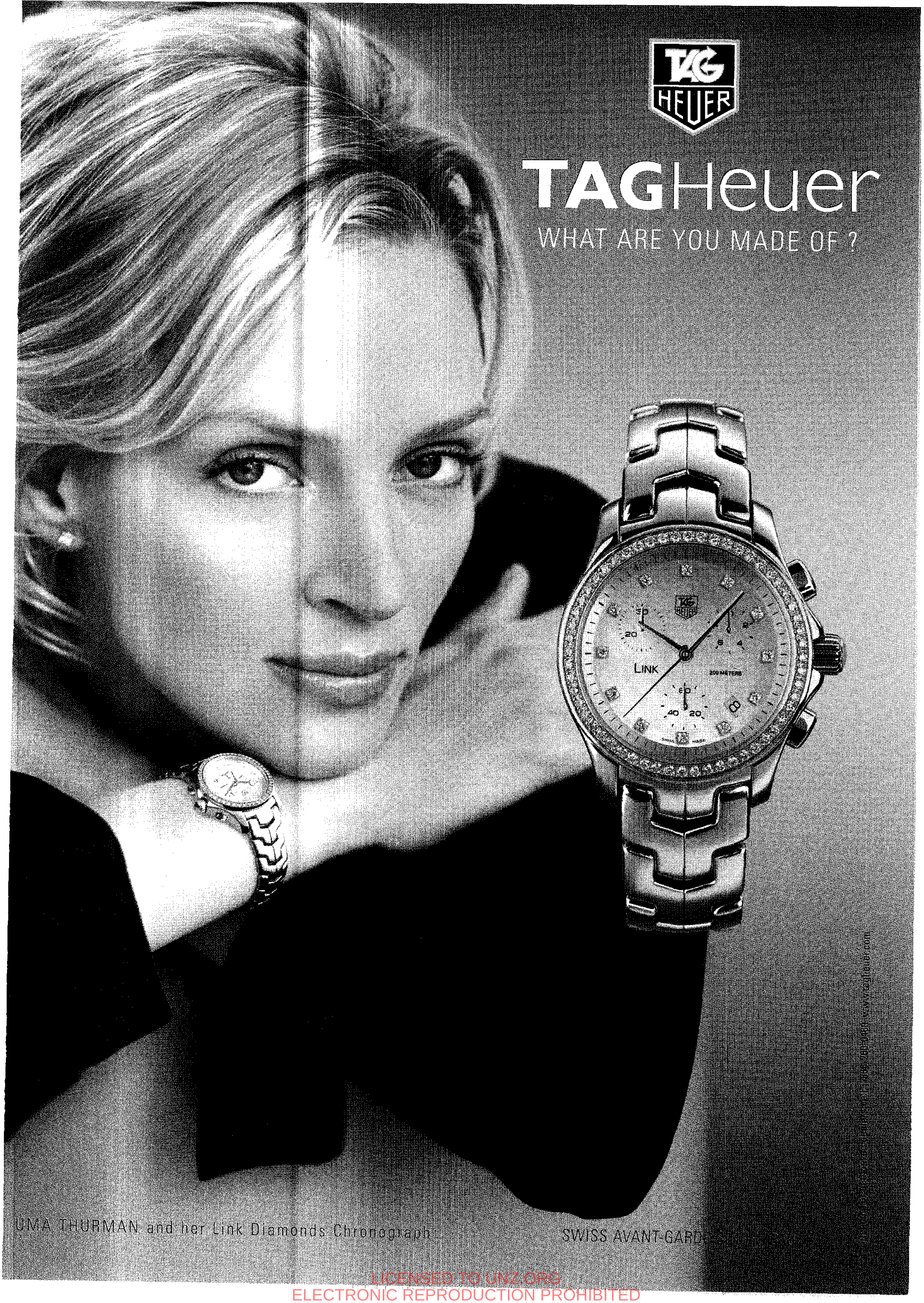
The Coup, an Oakland hip-hop act, plays the Bowery Ballroom on June 8.

PATRICK LONG

BOWERY POETRY CLUB
308 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (212-614-0505)—Through July 27: **Andy Friedman,** an illustrator and cartoonist who contributes to this magazine, is in the midst of a Thursday-night residency. Friedman started his stage career a few years ago, as a spoken-word artist who toured bars and delivered a set of monologues about the blues, folksingers, and his life while playing a slide show of his drawings and photographs. More recently, he has given in to his passion for country music, and he now sings to his projections, with the help of a backing band, the Other Failures, and some shrewd harmonizing. His stand at the club last summer resulted in his first album, "Live at the Bowery Poetry Club."

CUTTING ROOM
19 W. 24th St. (212-691-1900)—June 12: **Allan Harris,** a noted jazz singer with a rich, burnished voice, delivers material from his new album, "Cross That River," which has nary a jazz song on it. The release, the first in a planned trilogy, is a collection of acoustic country songs about black cowboys.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—June 9: The sallow-faced, darkly charismatic Eugene Hutz—equal parts Sid Vicious and Bertolt Brecht—leads the Gypsy-punk band **Gogol Bordello.** June 10: **Dungen,** the brainchild of a precocious multi-instrumentalist named Gustav Ejstes, is a Swedish outfit specializing in eclectic psychedelic rock. With **Witch,** a new band led by the guitarist J Mascis, famed for his work with the alternative trio Dinosaur Jr. Here, though, Mascis isn't playing the guitar—he's pounding the drums for an excursion into seventies-style THC-laced heavy metal. June 11:


TAG HEUER
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The legendary Belfast punk band **Stiff Little Fingers.** June 12: Manchester's **Buzzcocks** came from the same British scene as the Sex Pistols, but they made their mark with irresistible pop songs about romance rather than rough fare about overthrowing the system. The vocalist Pete Shelley's odes to teen-age heartache and sexual frustration sound as universal today as they did in the late seventies.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—June 7: Funky blues with the Choctaw singer and harmonica player **Charlie Musselwhite.** Also on June 7: **Dayna Kurtz,** a slide guitarist from New Jersey with a remarkable voice. On her last album, "Beautiful Yesterday," she distilled beauty out of melancholy as she covered songs by the likes of Billie Holiday, Prince, and Leonard Cohen. She went to the Sonoran Desert to write material for her new album, "Another Black Feather." June 8: The spoken-word artist and singer **Carl Hancock Rux.** June 11-12: Fronted by the hard-edged, Afro-topped vocalist Lisa Kekaula, Los Angeles's **Bellrays** bring soul to the garage-rock revival. If it seems as if they've mastered all the tricks of their forebears (that'd be everyone from the MC5 to James Brown), chalk it up to experience—they've been at it for more than a decade now. Their latest album, "Have a Little Faith," will make a believer out of the staunchest skeptic.

JONES BEACH
Wantagh, N.Y. (212-307-7171)—June 9: The **New Cars.** Greg Hawkes, the original keyboardist for the seminal New Wave band the Cars, and one of his fellow band members, the guitarist Elliot Easton, have recruited the former Tubes drummer, Prairie Prince, the ex-Utopia bassist Kasim Sulton, and the storied studio wiz and pop chameleon Todd Rundgren. Despite the absence of the original vocalist, Ric Ocasek, and bassist, Benjamin Orr (who died in 2000), the outfit re-creates the old hits (and delivers a few new songs) with aplomb. **Blondie** shares the bill, making for a fine night of eighties nostalgia.

RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL
Sixth Ave. at 50th St. (212-247-4777)—June 15: The country singer and crossover star **Gretchen Wilson** gets all jacked up.

ROSELAND
239 W. 52nd St. (212-307-7171)—June 14: The dance rock of England's **Arctic Monkeys.**

TOWN HALL
123 W. 43rd St. (212-840-2824)—June 9-10: The indie-rock femme fatale **Cat Power** (a.k.a. Chan Marshall), who cancelled her Valentine's Day show here earlier this year, performs songs from her latest album, "The Greatest," which taps into her Southern roots. Marshall was born in Atlanta, and the record was recorded in Memphis with an all-star backing band that included Mabon (Teenie) Hodges, who played guitar for Al Green and co-wrote the eternal hits "Love and Happiness" and "Take Me to the River." Hodges and the other vets join her here.

TABLES FOR TWO

A VOCE

41 Madison Ave., at 26th St. (212-545-8555)—For the past few years, Andrew Carmellini has been a Cyrano de Bergerac of sorts on the New York restaurant scene, sweeping diners off their feet while under the aegis of other, better known chefs (most recently Daniel Boulud, at Café Boulud). His talents insured that he couldn't maintain complete anonymity—he was named Best New Chef by *Food & Wine* in 2000, and Best New York City Chef at the Beard Awards in 2005—but he managed to avoid creating a cult of personality. Now he's stepped out of the shadows with A Voce, which opened in March. Still, his self-effacement seems to persist: instead of giving the place his own name, he chose the Italian phrase for "word of mouth." The space itself is demure, almost cold, with a sylvan interior (wood-panelled entry, colorfully lit mobiles of crosshatched sticks, bluntly lopped-off birch trunks propped up in the corners) that somewhat sinisterly echoes the leafiness of Madison Square Park, just across the way.

If modesty is Carmellini's virtue, his staff has no problem talking up the place. Recently, the neatly turned out manager placed a roasted-beet salad in front of a diner and, almost to himself, softly exclaimed, "Beautiful! Beautiful!" It was: firm ruby beets larded with Gorgonzola dolce and hazelnuts. Carmellini executes his dishes with grace, impeccable ingredients, and just a touch of innovation. Lamb tortellini, dotted with sweet cherry tomatoes and dressed with lemon zest, had a warm glow; the lamb Bolognese, served over homemade pappardelle, was rich and sandy, the rough flavor tamed by excellent sheep-milk ricotta.

Not everyone is seduced by Carmellini's food; one evening, the duck meatballs, sour and sweet, were well received on one side of the table but dismissed on the other, by a self-proclaimed "meatball connoisseur." "The meat just doesn't stand out," he complained. An entrée of black sea bass was equally divisive: to her, the fish was succulent, the broth bright and fresh, the addition of mussels and croutons a delight. To him, the plate was sparse, the fish too fishy, the vegetables too meagre. "It was good, just not thirty-dollars good," he groused. At least there was dessert to unite the table: *bomboloni*, vanilla or coffee custard encased in lemony dough, then dipped in chocolate. "These are delicious," the manager said as he set them down, and paused, wriggling his fingers, in search of the perfect word. "They are fiendish." (Open daily for lunch and dinner. Entrées $19-$30.)

—Andrea Thompson

WEBSTER HALL
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—June 8: The melodic folk-pop of **Mason Jennings.** With **Teddy Thompson.** June 9: The Scottish singer-songwriter **KT Tunstall.**

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through June 10: The vocalist **Andrea Marcovicci,** in an all-request show.

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—The bassist **Gary Peacock** and the drummer **Paul Motian** are a brilliant pair. Ever since their days together behind Bill Evans, in the mid-sixties, they've been known for their canny cat-and-mouse ability with texture and rhythm. The pianist **Marc Copeland,** a striking stylist, joins them here June 7-10.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—June 6-11: The veteran vocalist **Diane Schuur** returns to New York. With the up-and-coming young singer **Sara Gazarek.**

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and, starting June 6, **Eartha Kitt.**

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—June 6-11: With a cute show title, "Lockin' Up the Keys," a quartet featuring two like-minded post-bop players, the vibraphonist **Joe Locke** and the pianist **Geoffrey Keezer,** gets up and running.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—Through June 10: **James Naughton** has the voice of a fine actor, investing lyrics with expressive weight and extracting humor with a light touch.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—June 7-11: The **Yellowjackets** celebrate a quarter century of smooth jazz. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.** The **Mingus Big Band** takes over on Tuesdays.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—June 6-7: The remarkable guitarist **Lionel Loueke,** a native of Benin, plays solo for the early sets and is then joined by bass and drums for the late shows. June 8-10: Paying homage to an early employer, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, the trombonist and seashell virtuoso **Steve Turre** appears with a sextet that includes the saxophonists **Billy Harper,** on tenor, and **Vincent Herring,** on alto. If the astonishing Kirk were still with us, he could have played both horns simultaneously.

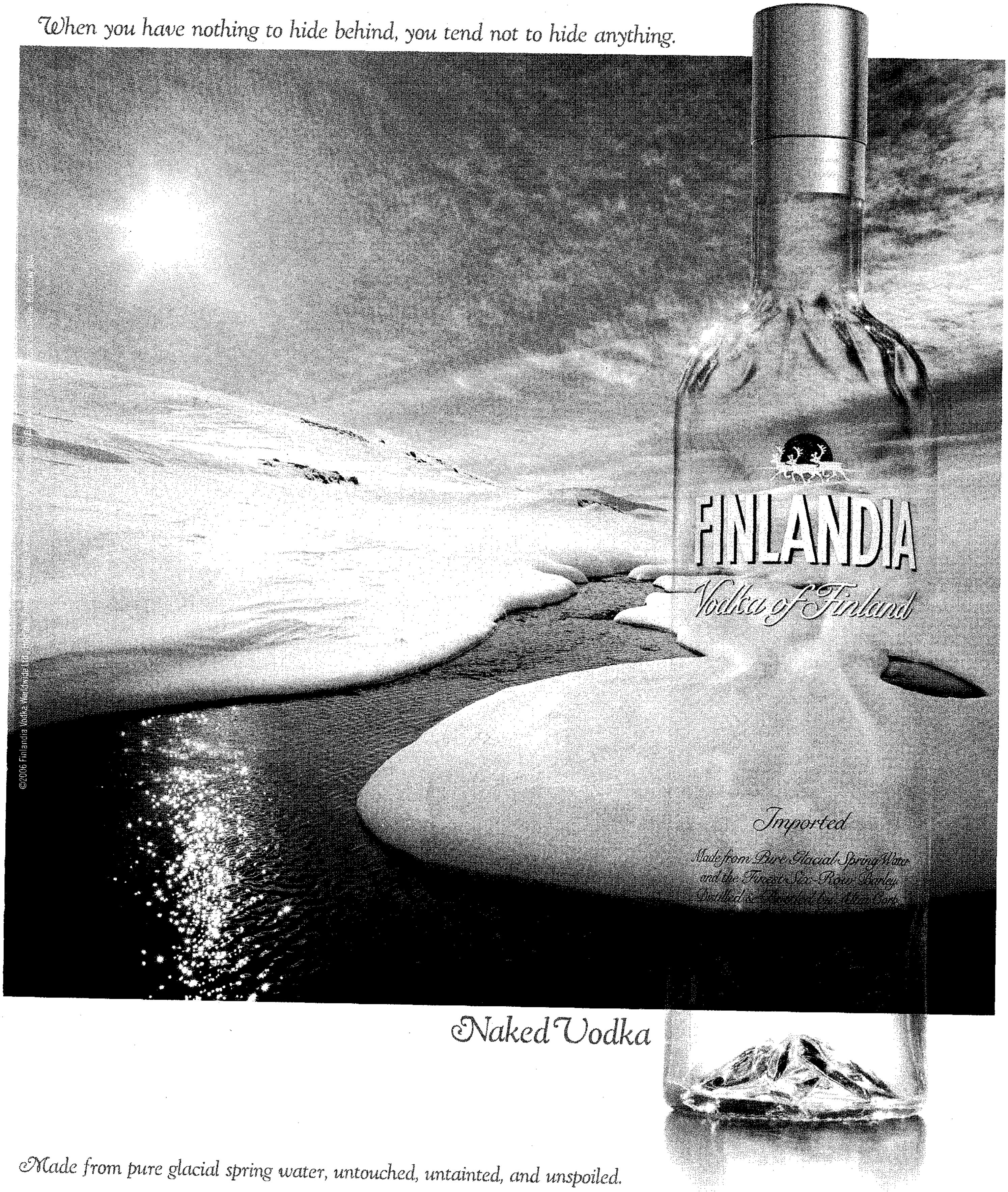
JVC JAZZ FESTIVAL
Diversity is the rule again this year, as legends of widely varying genres get their own shows. The festival, which runs through June 24, features performances by Ornette Coleman, Bucky Pizzarrelli, Israel (Cachao) Lopez, Smokey Robinson, Herbie Hancock, and Etta James. The first night, June 13, is a mix of serious jazz (the pianist **Hank Jones** and friends at the Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St.) and more funky sounds (the **Stanley Clarke/George Duke Project,** at Avalon, Sixth Ave. at 20th St.). (See also Readings and Talks. For a complete schedule, visit www.festivalproductions.net.)

TRIBECA PERFORMING ARTS CENTER
199 Chambers St. (212-220-1460)—The "Lost Jazz Shrines" series tribute to Café Bohemia winds down on June 9. During the fifties, Oscar Pettiford, an avatar of bebop bass playing, was a fixture at the legendary Village club; one of his signature compositions is titled "Bohemia After Dark." The pianist and music director **Eric Gould** and a horn-heavy septet, along with the bassist **Ron Carter,** honor Pettiford and the long-shuttered night spot.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—June 6-11: The pianist **Uri Caine** has what seems like a million imaginative projects going, ranging from musical evocations of turn-of-the-century New York ghetto life to pieces that remold Bach and Mahler. Compared to those grand doings, his compact trio, with the bassist **Drew Gress** and the drummer **Ben Perowsky,** may seem overly conventional, but don't think for a second that Caine plans on playing it safe. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

VISION FESTIVAL
The annual downtown celebration of avant-garde jazz—the urgent, the meditative, and everything in between—gets under way on June 12 with a film program that includes shorts about the saxophonist David S. Ware and the late trumpeter Raphe Malik and a retrospective of films about the saxophonist Sam Rivers. (Anthology Film Archives, Second Ave. at 2nd St.) The following night, the music commences with a tribute to Malik, who died on March 8 of this year. He was scheduled to open the festival; the reeds players **Sabir Mateen** and **Marshall Allen,** the trumpeters **Roy Campbell** and **Lewis Barnes,** and others will honor his memory. (Angel Orensanz Center, 172 Norfolk St.) (For more information, visit www.visionfestival.org. Through June 18.)

When you have nothing to hide behind, you tend not to hide anything.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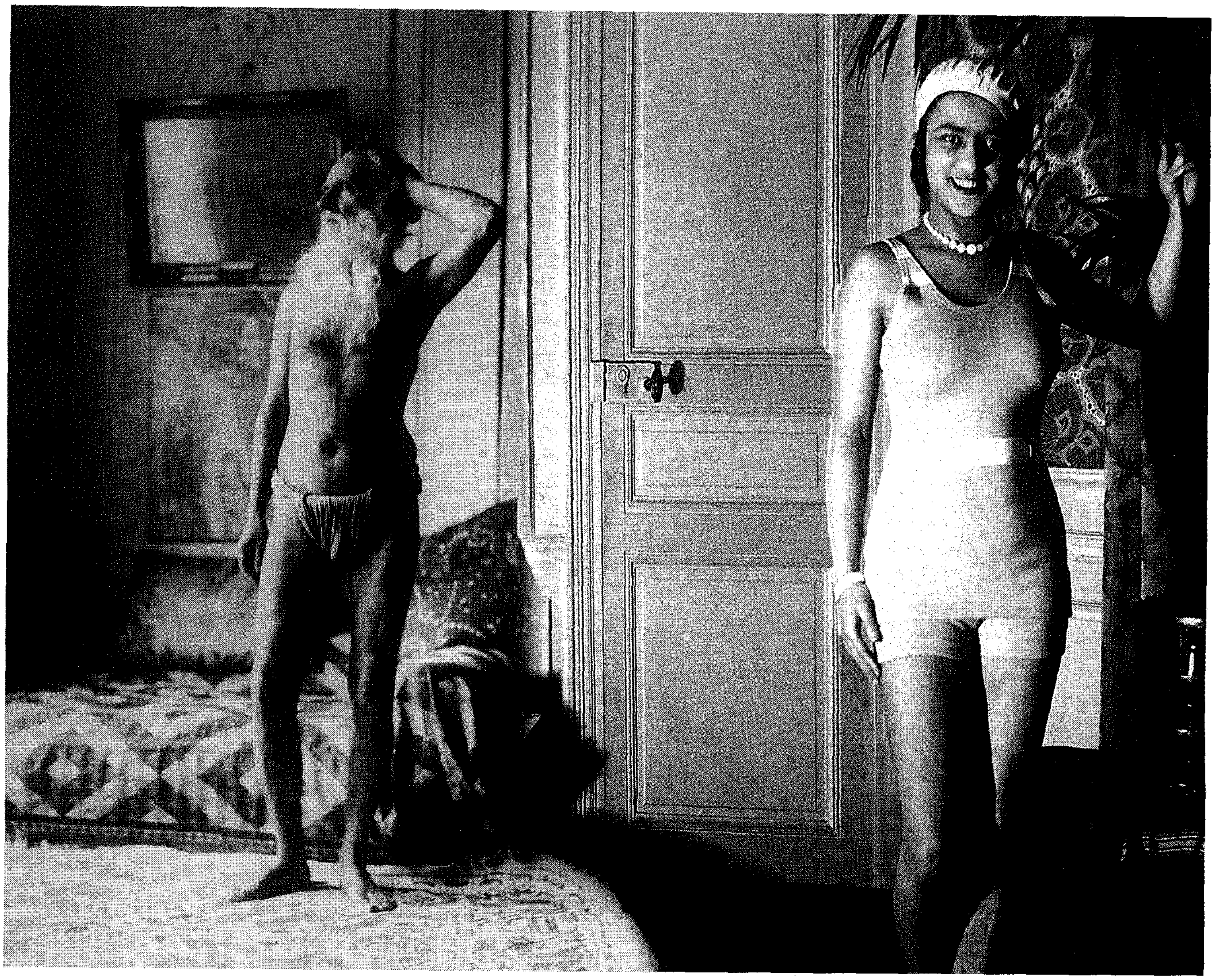

The New Delhi-based artist Vivan Sundaram's digital photomontages are on view at Sepia International through July 28.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"Girodet: Romantic Rebel,"** a retrospective of paintings and works on paper by the French artist Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson (1767-1824). Through Aug. 27. ♦ **"The Art of Betty Woodman."** Through July 30. ♦ **"Cai Guo-Qiang on the Roof: Transparent Monument."** The roof garden has reopened for the summer, with four sculptural works by the Chinese-born artist. Among them are "Clear Sky Black Cloud," a timed gunpowder explosion that produces a small cloud of smoke over Central Park each day at noon. Through Oct. 29. ♦ **"Hatshepsut: From Queen to Pharaoh."** Through July 9. ♦ **"Kara Walker at the Met: After the Deluge."** Through July 30. ♦ **"Anglo-Mania: Tradition and Transgression in British Fashion"** fills the English period galleries with mannequins dressed in costumes old and new, transforming the rooms into elaborate surreal tableaux. Mods mingle with dandies at a hunt ball, punks mix with dames in a drawing room, and the show as a whole conveys the interconnectedness and the bizarreness of both class and fashion. Through Sept. 4. ♦ Recent scholarship has reappraised the history of Tibetan weaponry, identifying sui-generis styles in what was previously assumed to be a design culture derivative of Chinese and Mongolian models. **"Warriors of the Himalayas: Rediscovering the Arms and Armor of Tibet"** draws on examples from the seventh to the mid-twentieth century, intended for both state pageantry and serious war: conical helmets damascened with gold, jewelled swords with protective demons carved into their hilts, elaborate equipage for horses, and distinctive lamellar cloaks, made with overlapping plates of iron sewn together with leather thongs and lined with silk. Through July 2. ♦ **"The Fabric of Life: Ikat Textiles of Indonesia."** The word "ikat" derives from a verb meaning "to tie," and the ancient textile art is surely the most exacting form of tie-dye ever invented. Each island in the Indonesian archipelago has its own traditions, but all involve an intensive process whereby the woven fabric's warp and weft are dyed separately, so that a pattern—tight chevrons, complex medallions, interlocking stripes—emerges only on the loom. The panels displayed include shawls, hip cloths, and other wearable articles, along with coverlets, tapestries, and divination cloths dense with glyphic designs. The palette is sombre and delicious, ranging from dark blood red to chocolate brown and indigo. Through Sept. 24. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Against the Grain: Contemporary Art from the Edward R. Broida Collection."** These selections from Broida's storeroom buck the tedium of private-collection exhibitions that merely ape museum trends. Instead, the architect-collector (who died earlier this spring) displayed a distinct sensibility, a bent toward poeticism that manifests itself in the work through ideas and materials. Bruce Nauman's "Seven Virtues/Seven Vices" includes limestone slabs with engraved words superimposed ("Envy/Hope"; "Justice/Avarice"), so they compete, both visually and spiritually, as it were, for our allegiance. Materials are key for Wolfgang Laib, whose rice-and-marble sculpture stands near Giuseppe Penone's canvas studded with acacia thorns. Philip Guston reënacts, in his paintings, the heroic battle between abstraction and representation, and Jennifer Bartlett's nine-hundred-and-eighty-seven-panel "Rhapsody" (1975-76) infuses the minimalist grid with romantic icons such as mountains, trees, and oceans. Through July 10. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"No Limits, Just Edges: Jackson Pollock Paintings on Paper"** may force a shift in perceptions of the Action painter: on a smaller scale, his Ab Ex swagger registers as more delicate and intimate. The show ranges from Pollock's earliest sketches to late, experimental works. Through Sept. 29. ♦ **"Zaha Hadid,"** a retrospective of work by the Pritzker Prize-winning visionary architect, who was born in Baghdad in 1950. Through Oct. 25. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—**"Full House,"** the Whitney's seventy-fifth-anniversary extravaganza, is opening in stages, starting with a floor (the fifth) filled with work by Edward Hopper on June 7; the rest of the show opens on June 29. ♦ The first and second floors of **"Day for Night,"** the 2006 Biennial, are still open, with works by Pierre Huyghe, T. Kelly Mason and Diana Thater, and Francesco Vezzoli, among others. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Darwin"** traces the discoveries and influence of the great naturalist (1809-82) with, among other things, a recreation of his study, samples of fossils he collected, and live specimens of tortoises, frogs, and iguanas like those that he encountered in the Galápagos Islands. Through Aug. 20. ♦ **"The Butterfly Conservatory."** Through June 23. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

ASIA SOCIETY

Park Ave. at 70th St. (212-288-6400)—This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Asia Society, which celebrates the occasion with **"A Passion for Asia: The Rockefeller Family Collects,"** a show honoring its patrons. Through Sept. 3. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 9.)

COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (212-849-8300)—"Scenic tourism" boomed in the later nineteenth century, as a rapidly enlarging middle class—assisted by similarly expanding railroads—amassed the wealth and acquired the taste to travel far and wide to admire nature. **"Frederic Church, Winslow Homer, and Thomas Moran: Tourism and the American Landscape"** tracks the contributions of the three painters in fomenting appreciation for a variety of wonder-sights: Niagara Falls, the Maine coast, Yellowstone, Yosemite. Church's beautiful, proto-photographic gouaches and sketches in colored pencil lead the way, but the collection of ephemera also boasts stereo slides, souvenir dishes, and the guestbook of the Catskill Mountain House, filled with brown-ink signatures heavy with Victorian flourishes. Through Oct. 22. ♦ **"Feeding Desire: Design and the Tools of the Table, 1500-2005."** Through Oct. 29. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5, Fridays, 10 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, noon to 6.)

DRAWING CENTER

35 Wooster St. (212-219-2166)—**"Eva Hesse: Drawing."** Through July 15. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 to 6, and Saturdays, 11 to 6.)

FRICK COLLECTION

1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—**"Veronese's Allegories: Virtue, Love, and Exploration in Renaissance Venice."** Through July 16. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 5.)

JEWISH MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**"Eva Hesse: Sculpture."** Through Sept. 17. ♦ **"Max Liebermann: From Realism to Impressionism."** Liebermann (1847-1935) flourished under what he called "the beautiful dream of assimilation," a period of German liberalism that lasted nearly to the end of his life. (He was forced to resign from the Prussian Academy of Art, where he'd been elected president, in 1933.) The arc of his career is like a walk through nineteenth-century art history. In youth, he followed the Realists, painting peasants and weavers and scenes from Amsterdam's Jewish quarter. Older age found him, somewhat belatedly, in the eighteen-nineties, following the Impressionists. A country house on Lake Wannsee, in suburban Berlin, served in later years as the artist's Giverny, an oasis of light and verdant color where he painted gardens devoted, in the German fashion, to both flowers and beer. Through July 30. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45, Thursdays, 11 to 9, and Fridays, 11 to 3. For the duration of the Hesse show, the museum will also be open on Saturdays, from 11 to 5:45, with no charge for admission.)

MORGAN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

225 Madison Ave., at 36th St. (212-685-0008)—The midtown oasis has reopened after almost three years of renovation and a Renzo Piano expansion. It marks the occasion with **"Masterworks from the Morgan,"** a selection of manuscripts, drawings, books, and seals from the collections. Manuscripts in the Brontë siblings' tiny handwriting, a libretto of "Aida" annotated by Verdi, and Picasso's pen-and-ink portrait of Marie-Thérèse Walter are among the items on display. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5, Fridays, 10:30 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Fifth Ave. at 103rd St. (212-534-1672)—**"The High Style of Dorothy Draper"** traces the career and accomplishments of the interior designer, whose 1941 classic "Entertaining is Fun!" was recently reissued. Through Sept. 10. ♦ **"On the Couch: Cartoons from *The New Yorker*"** presents almost eighty years' worth of psychoanalytic humor. Through July 23. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

NATIONAL ACADEMY MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-369-4880)—The Academy's hundred-and-eighty-first annual Invitational Exhibition of Contemporary Art is a smorgasbord of works by a hundred and twenty-four diverse artists, among them Tom Burkhardt, Alison Saar, Alexi Worth, Kiki Smith, Pat Steir, Lee Walton, Thomas Nozkowski, Alan Wiener, Steven Holl, Tony Feher, and Cordy Ryman. Through June 18. (Open Wednesdays and Thursdays, noon to 5, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

NEUE GALERIE

1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200)—Selections from the permanent collection are on display. (Open Thursdays and Saturdays through Mondays, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 11 to 9.)

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. (212-869-8089)—In 1876, Stéphane Mallarmé and Edouard Manet collaborated on "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune" and renewed for modernism the age-old dialogue between the sister arts of painting and poetry. **"French Book Art/Livres d'Artistes: Artists and Poets in Dialogue"** tracks similar collaborations across the last century and a quarter, with books and portfolios of all shapes and sizes by a rogues' gallery of French geniuses. Culled from the collections of the New York Public Library and the Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet, in Paris, the hundred and twenty-six items displayed include de Chirico's illustrations of Apollinaire's "Calligrammes," lithographs made to accompany Alfred Jarry's "Ubu Roi," and an edition of Duchamp's "Boîte Verte" filled with gnomic notes on his rebus-like magnum opus, "Le Grand Verre." Through Aug. 19. (Open Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 7:30, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

NOGUCHI MUSEUM

9-01 33rd Rd., at Vernon Blvd., Long Island City (718-204-7088)—**"Best of Friends: R. Buckminster Fuller and Isamu Noguchi."** Through Oct. 15. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and weekends, 11 to 6.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER

22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—**"John Lurie: Works on Paper."** Through Aug. 14. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART

150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000)—**"Holy Madness: Portraits of Tantric Siddhas."** Through Sept. 4. ♦ **"Take to the Sky: Flying Mystics in Himalayan Art."** Through Jan. 8. (Open Mondays and Thursdays, 11 to 5, Wednesdays, 11 to 7, Fridays, 11 to 10, and weekends, 11 to 6.)

THE SCULPTURE CENTER

44-19 Purves St., Long Island City (718-361-1750)—"The question, then, is how to paint one's subjectivity in the codes of culture," writes the artist Seth Price, whose contributions to the group show **"Grey Flags"** are the title and a loopy-visionary letter circulated as the press release. Other coded portraits of post-ironic despair—or is it elation?—include a wall of images and Post-It notes by Allen Ruppersberg, each beginning, "Honey, I rearranged the collection. . ." John Armleder installs a tête-a-tête of rose-colored armchairs and a rumpled pink shag rug over a floor made sparkly when Liam Gillick mopped it with whiskey and silver glitter. Apichatpong Weerasethakul's mournfully disjointed film follows normal folks around the alleyways of Thailand, while both Tacita Dean and The Atlas Group/Walid Raad teach us how to really watch a sunset. Also among the participants are Lutz Bacher, Helen Chadwick, Jonathan Monk, and Gabriel Orozco. Through July 30. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 11 to 6.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM

144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**"Energy/Experimentation: Black Artists and Abstraction 1964-1980"** is a fragmentary sampling rather than a comprehensive survey, but it nonetheless demonstrates how varied sixties and seventies abstraction actually was. Among the artists are Sam Gilliam, Tom Lloyd, William T. Williams, and Howardena Pindell. Through July 2. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
LION OF THE BRONX

Anyone who has ever wondered what Stanley Kubrick's moviemaking was like before his satirical phase of the nineteen-sixties ("Lolita," "Dr. Strangelove") should go to Moving Image to see his second feature film, "Killer's Kiss," which he photographed, directed, edited, co-wrote, and co-produced in 1955, when he was twenty-seven. The setting is noir New York—lonely rooms, a depressed dance hall—and the material is a typical surly hardboiled narrative of an embittered loser (Jamie Smith) falling for a broad (Irene Kane) who may or may not be a good person. He saves her from her rapacious boss (Frank Silvera), and this leads to murder in an alley, chases across rooftops, and an amazing fight in a mannequin factory. Kubrick departs from realism quickly enough: there's the startling use of subjective camera (it gets walloped a few times), and, in the fight scene, an unprecedented mix of lunging physical movement and comic surrealism. As the men whomp each other with naked mannequins, a row of hands, hanging from a rack, quiver in excitement.

—David Denby

HIROSHI TANABE

GALLERIES–UPTOWN

Galleries are usually open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; please call the gallery for exact hours.

PETER BIALOBRZESKI
Bialobrzeski cites both Caspar David Friedrich and Joel Sternfeld as influences for this series of massively scaled landscape photographs, and he strikes an ideal balance between romanticism and realism. His subject is *Heimat*, a nostalgic notion of the German homeland, which was tainted by the Nazis. Bialobrzeski attempts to rescue it from kitsch and xenophobia in these broad, low-slung, and shamelessly beautiful vistas of snowy mountains, verdant hills, and busy beaches. People, often quite tiny, are visible in all these spaces, and their humble presence gives an abstract idea a spark of soul. Through June 29. (Laurence Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 212-397-3930.)

ARTHUR DOVE
Squibs of dream and abstracted pastoral, Dove's watercolors from the thirties and forties are small, sketchbook-on-the-knee studies of trees, barns, boats, and sunlight. Fifty-nine rarely exhibited drawings, most measuring five by seven inches or smaller, concentrate on an intense and sombre palette: stormy Seneca Lake, in upstate New York, rendered as a series of wavy dark-blue bars; a barn in dried-blood red identified as "The Slaughter House." There are moments of happiness, though, too, as in the hot yellows in a street of companionable houses or the spidery lines of trees delineated in ink against a washy splash of summer light. Through June 23. (Alexandre, 41 E. 57th St. 212-755-2828.)

PETER ROSTOVSKY
Rostovsky's unlikely action figure is a six-inch-high model of himself taking a photograph with a digital camera. He stands on a little rocky mound atop a plinth, and before him on the wall hangs the painted vista, a vast pastiche of Hudson River School magnificence. The broad irony of "Epiphany Model" recurs in slightly milder form in Rostovsky's other landscape paintings, several of which are bleached to near-monochrome by mist. Two renditions show the scene set at an oblique angle to the picture plane and framed by blank canvas, making it clear that the subject of the image exists only in a photographic fantasy world. Through June 16. (The Project, 37 W. 57th St. 212-688-4673.)

Short List

JAMES LEE BYARS: Michael Werner, 4 E. 77th St. 212-988-1623; and Mary Boone, 745 Fifth Ave. 212-752-2929. Through June 24. **JAMES CASTLE / WALKER EVANS:** Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 212-794-0550. Through Aug. 11. **JOEL MEYEROWITZ:** Houk, 745 Fifth Ave. 212-750-7070. Through June 17. **JUAN MUÑOZ:** Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160. Through June 10. **ED MUSANTE:** Thiebaud, 42 E. 76th St. 212-737-9759. Through July 1. **GUY PÈNE DU BOIS:** Graham, 1014 Madison Ave. 212-535-5767. Through June 30. **MAN RAY:** Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 212-752-1223. Through June 30. **SUSANA SOLANO:** McKee, 745 Fifth Ave. 212-688-5951. Through June 30. **SARAH SZE:** Doris C. Freedman Plaza, 60th St. at Fifth Ave. Public Art Fund, 212-980-4575. Through Oct. 22. **ANTONI TÀPIES:** PaceWildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 212-421-3292. Through June 30. **"FREUD AND CONTEMPORARY ART: THE COLLECTION OF THE SIGMUND FREUD MUSEUM VIENNA":** Austrian Cultural Forum, 11 E. 52nd St. 212-319-5300. Through July 8. **"PHOTO LIBRIS":** Greenberg, 41 E. 57th St. 212-334-0010. Through June 17.

GALLERIES–CHELSEA

MAMMA ANDERSSON
Andersson's acrylics on wafer-thin panels look like the offspring of an unlikely coupling between two other Zwirner artists: the Belgian Luc Tuymans and the Leipzig master Neo Rauch. Tuymans's hazy explorations of the intersection between painting and photography (a project inherited from Gerhard Richter) are evident in Andersson's paintings of chilly landscapes and blank interiors, while Rauch's saturated, antiqued colors and surrealistic, stacked compositions are also strongly present. Andersson parts ways with Tuymans and Rauch, however, by not asserting her work as a grander commentary on history. Paintings like "Cul-de-Sac," a cross-sectional view of birch trees, and "About a Girl," a casually posed gathering of women, convey the quieter, more domestic scope of her work. Through June 17. (Zwirner, 525 W. 19th St. 212-727-2070.)

OLIVER BOBERG
Boberg constructs and then photographs hyperrealistic scale models of ordinary urban features (driveways, factories, back alleys, unfinished office blocks) and unremarkable landscapes. At once generic and meticulously specific, his dead spaces (like Craig Kalpakjian's computer-generated corporate corridors) are redundant as comments on our global wasteland, but his pictures of them are hard to dismiss. Because Boberg's seamless artifice is an end in itself, the work (including a series of DVD projections that introduce weather to the sites) doesn't really lead the viewer anywhere. Once you enter his cul-de-sac, however, that blank wall becomes strangely compelling. Through June 17. (DCKT, 552 W. 24th St., 212-741-9955; and Paul Morris, 530 W. 25th St., 212-727-2752.)

JOE DEAL
Deal's modestly scaled black-and-white photographs were included—along with work by Robert Adams, Lewis Baltz, Henry Wessel, and Stephen Shore—in the influential 1975 exhibition "New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape." Some of those pictures are here, along with others from the mid-nineteen-seventies, and their deadpan matter-of-factness is not meant to please. Deal's subject is suburbia, notably a number of newly built homes in Albuquerque that look as stark and uninviting as the cleared lots on all sides. One fenced-in back yard in Wyoming is nothing but dirt and tire tracks: Western wilderness cut down to size. Through June 24. (Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave. 212-989-7600.)

NICOLE EISENMAN
Eisenman's primary aesthetic touchstones, Ashcan realism and thirties cartoons, could hardly be accused of abstruseness. Her work has retained these straightforward formal elements, with floppy figures recalling Olive Oyl or Wimpy, while her painting has migrated from funny, feminist harangues into something considerably stranger. A gallery statement quotes the Renaissance scholar Angus Fletcher on allegory: "a fantasized energy, like the fantasized power conferred on the shaman by his belief in daemons." A thirty-foot diptych translates this into visual terms, with a surrealist journey through the forces of artistic inspiration and travail. In one panel, the painter, ensconced in a wooden ark, is surrounded by floating, satellite images; a second panel plays out a Boschian fantasy of babies, rocky outcroppings, and women huddled in a subterranean cave. Through June 17. (Koenig, 545 W. 23rd St. 212-334-9255.)

FRANK MAJORE
In his first New York exhibition since 1998, Majore shows signature work from the nineteen-eighties along with new photographs of nudes. Teetering between arch critique and pop celebration, Majore's earlier photos are high-gloss still-lifes that conflate arty ad clichés and camera-club kitsch to sometimes comic, always shrewd ends. The new work isn't as tricky, but there's no reason to distrust its more immediate appeal. Appropriated from found snapshots, cropped, and blown up, the nudes combine the sunny innocence of vintage naturist propaganda and the super-grainy, slightly sinister cast of surveillance photographs. In one impressionist image, two women dissolve in the yellow-orange glow at the side of a stream like bursts of pollen. Through June 10. (White Columns, 320 W. 13th St. 212-924-4212.)

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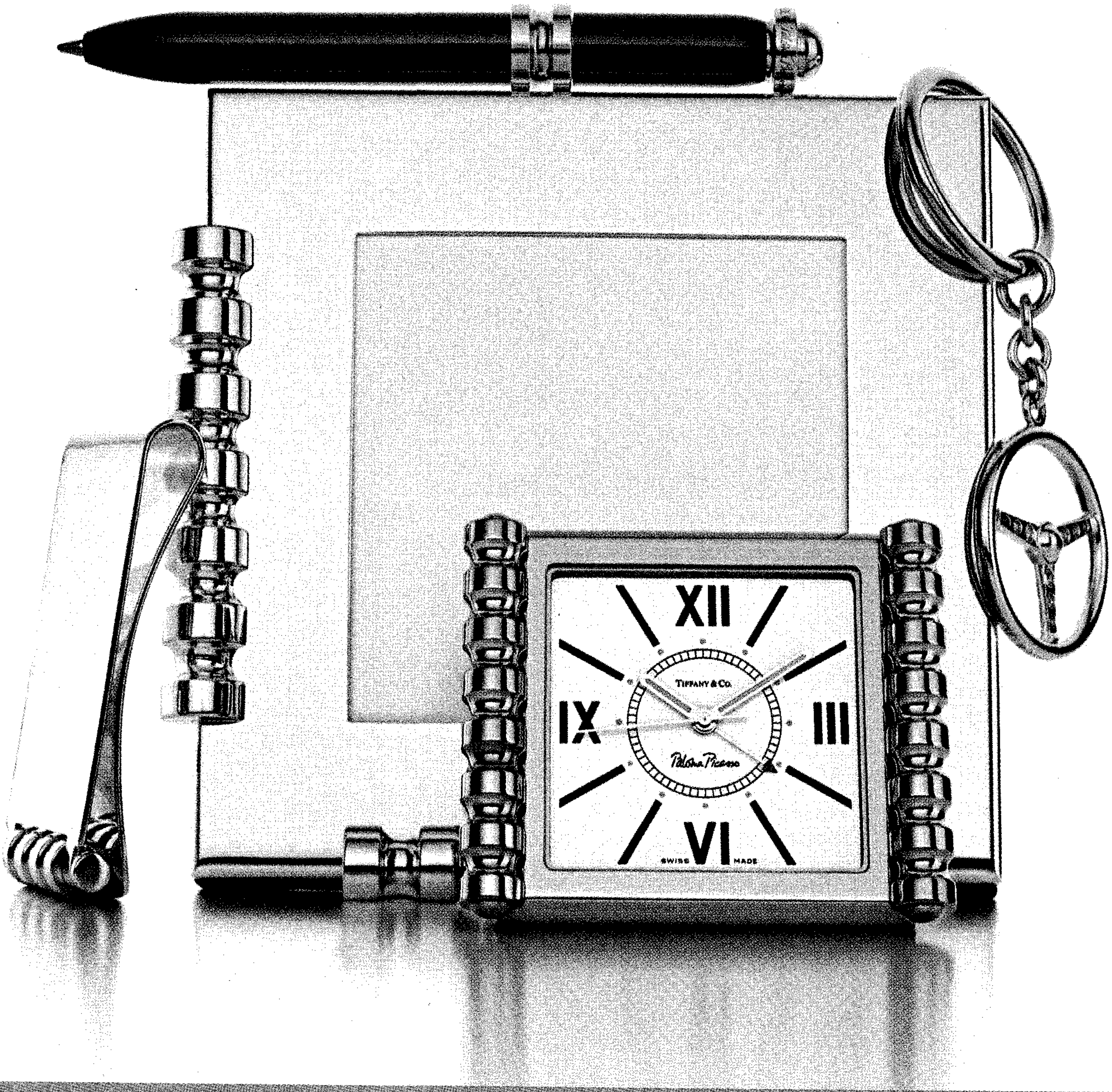
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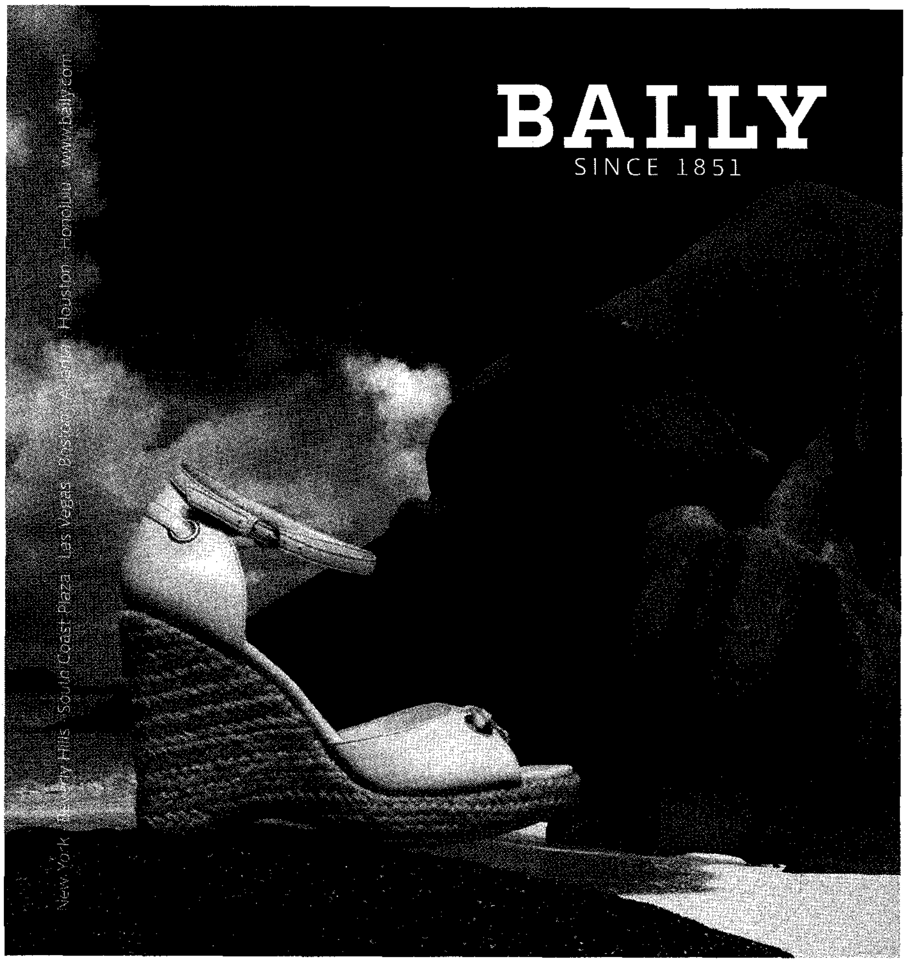
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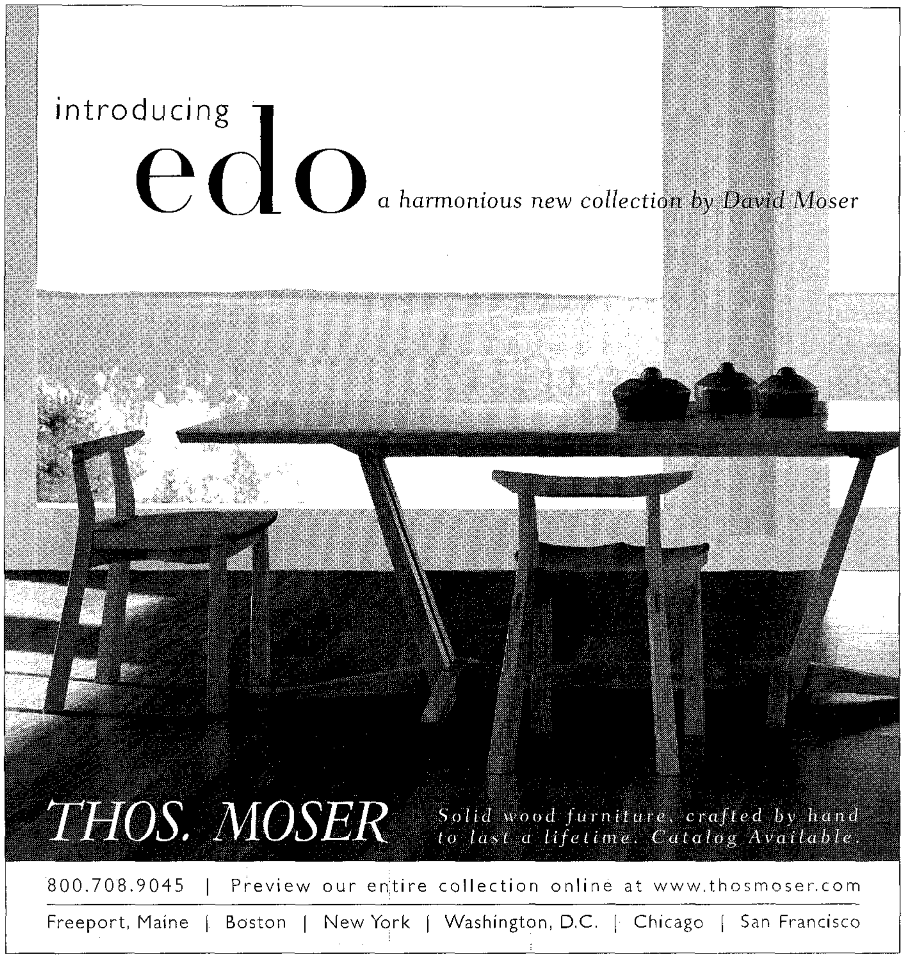
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WANGECHI MUTU
Mutu's collages and large-scale works on Mylar recycle techniques dear to Dada and Surrealism, notably the grafting of animal and humanoid body parts to make grotesque creations. They also resemble, in outline, the calligraphic silhouettes of stablemate Kara Walker. And yet Mutu draws the viewer in with her sparkling, dazzlingly decorative surfaces—then strikes with a critique of these very concepts, from the "exotic" patterns of African animal pelts and textiles (Mutu is from Kenya) to the tawny skin of the sexualized Other. A suite of collaged postcards fusing African ethnographic images with Western porn is a bit too literal, but a duet of "thrones," plain wooden chairs sporting spidery leg extensions and dripping bloodlike wine, are fine examples of her creepily seductive aesthetic. Through June 17. (Sikkema Jenkins, 530 W. 22nd St. 212-929-2262.)

LAURIE SIMMONS
Mounted to coincide with the opening of her short film, "The Music of Regret," Simmons's current exhibition is partly retrospective and includes familiar images of ventriloquists' dummies and objects (a gun, a camera, a birthday cake) on legs that inspired scenes in the film, as well as a few new photos made on the set. (Yes, that's Meryl Streep as the artist's stand-in.) Simmons's other new work, a color series that makes use of three scale-model stage sets from the nineteen-forties, recalls her earliest and still most resonant images of doll-house interiors. Sparsely populated with figurines and cutouts, these retro rooms suggest that the confusion between domesticity and romance may never be resolved. Through June 30. (Sperone Westwater, 415 W. 13th St. 212-999-7337.)

Short List

MICHEL AUDER: Newman Popiashvili, 504 W. 22nd St. 212-274-9166. Through June 17. **JAMES LEE BYARS:** Rubenstein, 527 W. 23rd St., 526 W. 24th St., and 534 W. 24th St. 212-627-8000; and Mary Boone, 541 W. 24th St. 212-752-2929. Through June 24. **JEAN DUBUFFET / JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT:** PaceWildenstein, 534 W. 25th St. 212-929-7000. Through June 17. **MUNRO GALLOWAY / FRANCIS CAPE:** Murray Guy, 453 W. 17th St. 212-463-7372. Through June 17 and July 28, respectively. **THOMAS HELBIG:** Bortolami Dayan, 510 W. 25th St. 212-727-2050. Through June 17. **JENNY HOLZER:** Lambert, 564 W. 25th St. 212-242-3611; and Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727. Through June 17. **PAUL ETIENNE LINCOLN:** Burgin, 243 W. 18th St. 212-462-2668. Through June 23. **LORETTA LUX:** Milo, 525 W. 25th St. 212-414-0370. Through June 24. **JEFF MERMELSTEIN:** Kasher, 521 W. 23rd St. 212-966-3978. Through June 10. **MICHAEL PERRONE:** Steinberg, 526 W. 26th St. 212-924-5770. Through June 24. **MARTIN SCHOELLER:** Hasted Hunt, 529 W. 20th St. 212-627-0006. Through Sept. 4. **RICHARD SERRA:** Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 212-741-1111. Through Aug. 11. **VIVAN SUNDARAM:** Sepia International, 148 W. 24th St. 212-645-9444. Through July 28. **"AN ONGOING LOW-GRADE MYSTERY":** Cooper, 521 W. 21st St. 212-255-1105. Through July 1. **"REGENERATION: 50 PHOTOGRAPHERS OF TOMORROW":** Aperture, 547 W. 27th St. 212-505-5555. Through June 22.

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
At thirty-seven, Alexei Ratmanski has already been the director of the Bolshoi Ballet for two years. This Thursday, N.Y.C.B. premières "Russian Seasons," his first work for the company, set to a suite of pieces for violin, soprano, and string orchestra, by the Russian composer Leonid Desyatnikov, inspired by folk songs from the Russian Lake District. Like the music, the dances explore Russian religious and folk themes, and they fuse them with Western dance forms. There are four principals (Sofiane Sylve, Wendy Whelan, Jenifer Ringer, and Albert Evans), three soloists (Ringer, Rachel Rutherford, and Jonathan Stafford), and a corps of eight, and the soprano Susana Poretsky will sing onstage. Casts are announced a week in advance on the company's Web site. ♦ June 7 at 7:30 (an all-

Robbins program): "In the Night," "The Cage," "Andantino," and "N.Y. Export: Opus Jazz." ♦ June 8 at 8: "Monumentum pro Gesualdo," "Movements for Piano and Orchestra," "Romeo and Juliet," "Russian Seasons" (première), and "Firebird." ♦ June 9 at 8: "Divertimento No. 15," "Friandises," and "Fancy Free." ♦ June 10 at 2: "Concerto Barocco," "Russian Seasons," and "Episodes." ♦ June 10 at 8: "Donizetti Variations," "The Cage," "Duo Concertant," and "Episodes." ♦ June 11 at 3: "Divertimento from 'Le Baiser de la Fée,'" "Russian Seasons," and "Fearful Symmetries." ♦ June 13 at 7:30: "Donizetti Variations," "Russian Seasons," and "Firebird." (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570. Through June 25.)

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE
James Kudelka's "Cinderella," with its down-to-earth retelling of the perennial tale—and a fair share of comic gags—continues its run this week. Then the mood takes a dramatic turn, with "Giselle." With its themes of ardent love, disillusionment, and madness and its fascination with death, "Giselle" is the epitome of Romanticism. Similarly, the role of Giselle, with its brilliant steps and emotional volatility, has been a defining one for ballerinas. Last July, Diana Vishneva (a Kirov dancer who had newly joined the company) danced the role just once, and people are still talking about it; she will perform it twice this season. ♦ June 7 at 2: "Cinderella" (with Gillian Murphy and David Hallberg). ♦ June 7 at 8: "Cinderella" (with Julie Kent and Marcelo Gomes). ♦ June 8 at 8: "Cinderella" (with Xiomara Reyes and Guillaume Côté). ♦ June 9 at 8: "Cinderella" (with Murphy and Hallberg). ♦ June 10 at 2: "Cinderella" (with Kent and Gomes). ♦ June 10 at 8: "Cinderella" (with Reyes and Côté). ♦ June 12 at 8: "Giselle" (with Reyes and Julio Bocca). ♦ June 13 at 8: "Giselle" (with Paloma Herrera and Gomes). (Metropolitan Opera House, Lincoln Center. 212-362-6000. Through July 15.)

MIGUEL GUTIERREZ AND THE POWERFUL PEOPLE
A return engagement of last December's Dance Theatre Workshop program pairs two sharp-eyed, unflinching dances. In the solo "Retrospective Exhibitionist," Gutierrez is a punk narcissist—aggressively bored in his drawstring sweatpants and Boris Badenov T-shirt, surrounded by A.V. equipment. While a video shows Gutierrez giving a lecture, he repeats his own lines into a microphone. Gutierrez knows that performers can be vain, egotistical, and—well, masturbatory. But he also sees the sublimity in a dancer exulting in performance—especially in the later, all-female trio, "Difficult Bodies," a tour de force of punishing unison dancing. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. June 6-10 at 7:30.)

MANDANCE PROJECT
To the walls, staircases, hanging ropes, and handheld flashlights that Eliot Feld has used recently to goad his creativity he now adds a trampoline, tin cans, and more ropes, in three premières. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave. 212-242-0800. June 6-10 at 8 and June 11 at 2.)

NOCHE FLAMENCA
Amid the international lineup flown in for this year's Flamenco Festival, the standout performance came from a Spanish dancer whom New Yorkers have come to think of as one of their own: Soledad Barrio. The troupe she leads with her husband, Martín Santangelo, now returns to the East Village's small and slightly seedy Theatre 80 for a two-month run. Except for a new title, "Cielo de Tierra" ("Heaven of Earth"), the show is unlikely to deviate much from the company's previous pared-down productions. No lover of *flamenco puro* would want it to. (80 St. Marks Pl. 212-352-3101. June 7-9 at 8, June 10 at 2 and 8, and June 11 at 2 and 5. Through July 30.)

"THE K SOUND"
The multimedia artist and self-described "director of behavior" Michael Portnoy—who is most famous for dancing, uninvited, next to Bob Dylan during the 1998 Grammy Awards with the words "Soy Bomb" written across his chest—presents a new dance-theatre work. An international anthology of jokes, sung by a "diva wizard" and acted out by a motley cast that includes Sarah Michelson and Jeremy Wade, provides material for a histrionic deconstruction of the cultural assumptions built into the

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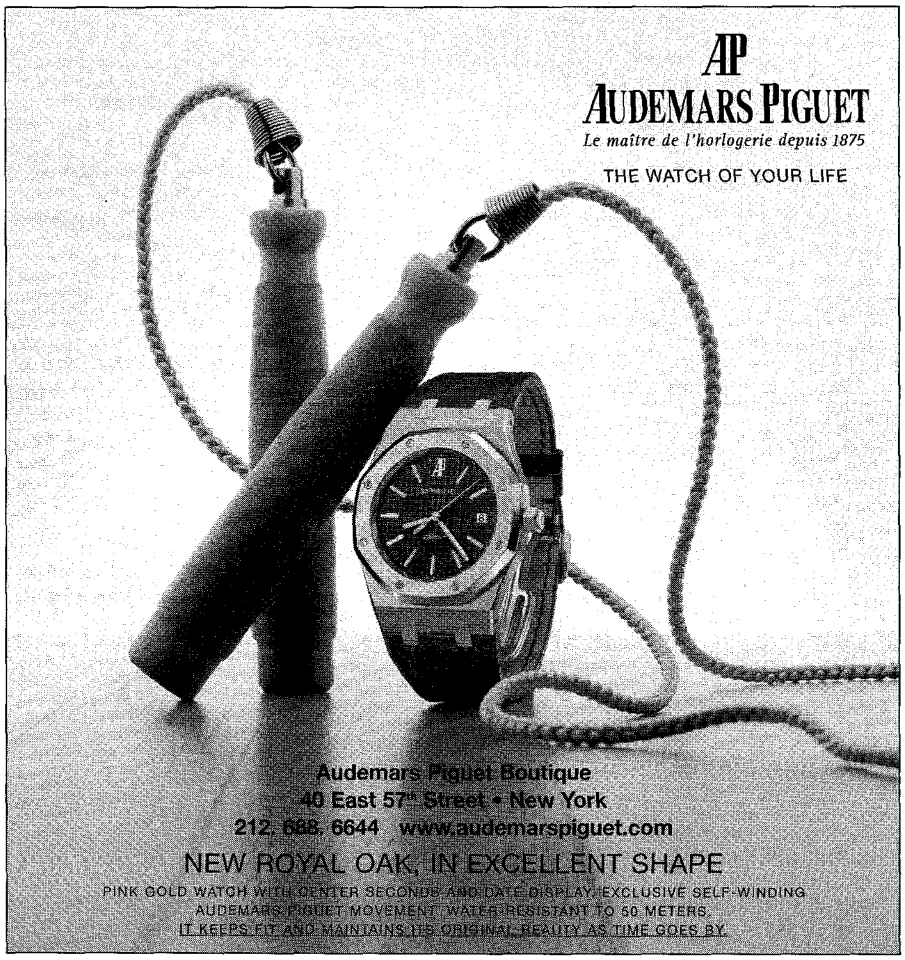

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structure of funny stories and punch lines. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793. June 8-10 at 8.)

CHRISTOPHER CAINES DANCE COMPANY
"Worklight," an evening-long suite of dances, concludes its run. (Studio 4, 130 W. 56th St. 718-554-1948. June 8 at 8.)

"4-ISH"
Marco Gerris and his band of intrepid hipsters make club and street-inflected dances that mix old school and new school. In their latest concoction, cocky half-pipe skateboarders and break-dancers execute gravity-defying stunts while cool digital effects flicker on giant video displays. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. June 9 at 7, June 10 at 2 and 7, and June 11 at noon and 5. Through June 18.)

"AM+BU$H+ED"
For her début as a choreographer, Michela Marino-Lerman, a rapid-fire nineteen-year-old tap dancer, has assembled a cast of fellow-hoofers ranging from the preteen wonders Hannah Leah Dunn and Warren Craft to a genial father figure, Hank Smith. The evening's three sections divide into loose themes of self-expression, the sorry state of the world, and tap's generational continuity, but, except for a little spoken word, the message is confined to the refreshingly broad choice of music—Muddy Waters and Curtis Mayfield, as well as a more traditional live jazz trio—and the exuberant tapping. (Dixon Place, 258 Bowery. 212-219-0736. June 9-10 at 8. Through June 24.)

CLASSICAL NOTES
WITH THIS RING

For decades, Wagner fans have assumed that, first, Georg Solti's Decca recording of "Der Ring des Nibelungen" (made in Vienna from 1958 to 1966) was the finest one available, and, second, that it was the first set ever to be recorded in stereo. But the release (on Testament) of **"Siegfried,"** the first installment of a complete cycle recorded at the Bayreuth Festival in 1955, has challenged both of those assumptions. This "Ring" was also a Decca product, but it was quietly shelved, partly because the powerful producer John Culshaw was beginning to question the appeal of bringing live recordings, complete with their unavoidable mistakes, into the increasingly high-tech modern home. Soon he would embark upon his studio "Ring" with Solti—which, in its immaculate perfection, is as much a product of its time as Philip Johnson's glass-box architecture.

"Siegfried" has always been the least beloved of the four operas, but you would never know it from the 1955 recording, which crackles with energy. Not only is the cast first-rate—with the vivid Brünnhilde of Astrid Varnay and with Hans Hotter and Wolfgang Windgassen, Solti's Wotan and Siegfried, in fresher voice than they would be seven years later—but so is the conductor, Joseph Keilberth, who had a lighter, more spontaneous, and more lyrically flexible touch than his more famous colleague.

The Wagner performances of Pierre Boulez are also noted for their brisk tempos. But while Keilberth makes the orchestra part of the drama, Boulez's interpretation of "Siegfried" seems more like a soundtrack to the still astonishing 1976 Bayreuth production by Patrice Chéreau, first seen on PBS and now released (with the rest of the "Ring") on DVD by Deutsche Grammophon. This is, above all, a riveting piece of theatre, but while the cast is as good as any from the era, only Gwyneth Jones, as Brünnhilde, really matches her dramatic conviction with singing that could compare to the best of the golden age.

—*Russell Platt*

"DANCING IN CITY PARKS"
The second installment of Dancing in the Streets' free series of outdoor performances brings some Caribbean spice to Red Hook. Born in St. Lucia and based in Philadelphia, Tania Isaac, the phenomenal soloist of Rennie Harris's "Facing Mekka," brings her own company with dances blending modern and eastern-Caribbean aesthetics, while the New York-based folkloric company Ase Dance Theatre Collective offers takes on Haitian heritage (one involving the fifth graders of P.S. 27). An open-to-all dance jam session follows. (Coffey Park, Red Hook. 212-625-3505. June 10 at 3.)

FLAMENCO VIVO CARLOTA SANTANA
In "Burlador," the ever-slick ensemble channels the legend of Don Juan. Arranging passages around a chain of seduction-and-betrayal duets, the contemporary choreographer Rafaela Carrasco folds in movements from tango and ballet. But her most striking effects come from traditional elements, like the long-trained *bata de cola* dress, put to untraditional use: here the woman wields the tail to entrap a man, or, after her lover has kicked it around, drapes it over her head to disappear into her sorrow. Antonio Hidalgo's "Imágenes Flamencas" surveys the dance's evolution. The music for both premières is played live. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave. 212-242-0800. June 13 at 8. Through June 18.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

"VAN GOGH'S EAR"
The Montreal Chamber Music Festival comes to a friendly venue—the French Institute Alliance Française—to join the Ensemble for the Romantic Century to offer a new music-theatre work about the troubled artist, who saw an intimate parallel between the action of painting and the performance of music. Eve Wolf's script is based on Vincent's letters to his brother Theo; the musicians (who include the mezzo-soprano Desirée Halac and the violinist Andy Simionescu) perform appropriate works by Debussy, Fauré, Franck, and Chausson. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 212-307-4100. June 8 at 8.)

AMATO OPERA
Anthony Amato's East Village chamber-opera company ends its season with a Lilliputian production of **"Faust,"** sung with gusto by a mostly amateur cast. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 212-228-8200. June 9-10 at 7:30 and June 11 at 2:30.)

AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: "FROM RUSSIA WITH MOZART"
Russians take their Mozart seriously. Dargomïzhsky's **"The Stone Guest,"** based on the play that Pushkin wrote after hearing "Don Giovanni," is the Russian equivalent of Thomson's "Four Saints in Three Acts," hugely influential and rarely heard; Rimsky-Korsakov's **"Mozart and Salieri"** was inspired by another Pushkin work, which perpetrates the myth (made famous in the movie "Amadeus") that the Salzburg genius was done in by his jealous older colleague. The largely Russian cast, conducted by Leon Botstein, is headed by the tenor Leonid Zakhozhaev. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5030. June 11 at 3.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA OF THE AMERICAS
In the nineties, all the great young classical musicians seemed to be coming from Finland; now Central and South America are the hot spots. The young Mexican conductor Alondra de la Parra leads the members of this newly minted ensemble not only in classic works by Bernstein, Revueltas, and Piazzolla but also in the world première of the Venezuelan composer Paul Desenne's Concerto for Double Bass—featuring his countryman Edicson Ruiz, the youngest musician in the Berlin Philharmonic. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-875-5030. June 8 at 8.)

"REWIND"
Paul Haas, the admired young music director of the New York Youth Symphony, has branched out to head this new series, which makes its début amidst the evocative, neo-Gothic gloom of the Angel Orensanz Center (a former synagogue). The violinists Anne Akiko Meyers and Colin Jacobsen, along with the young chamber orchestra the Knights, will rearrange themselves for each segment of the concert, a played-through "set" that will feature music by Purcell, Villa-Lobos, Schnittke, Stravinsky, Schoenberg ("Verklärte Nacht"), and James MacMillan, linked by electroacoustic interludes composed by Joel Morales, Joshua Penman, and Judd Greenstein. (172 Norfolk St. 516-319-9307. June 8 at 8.)

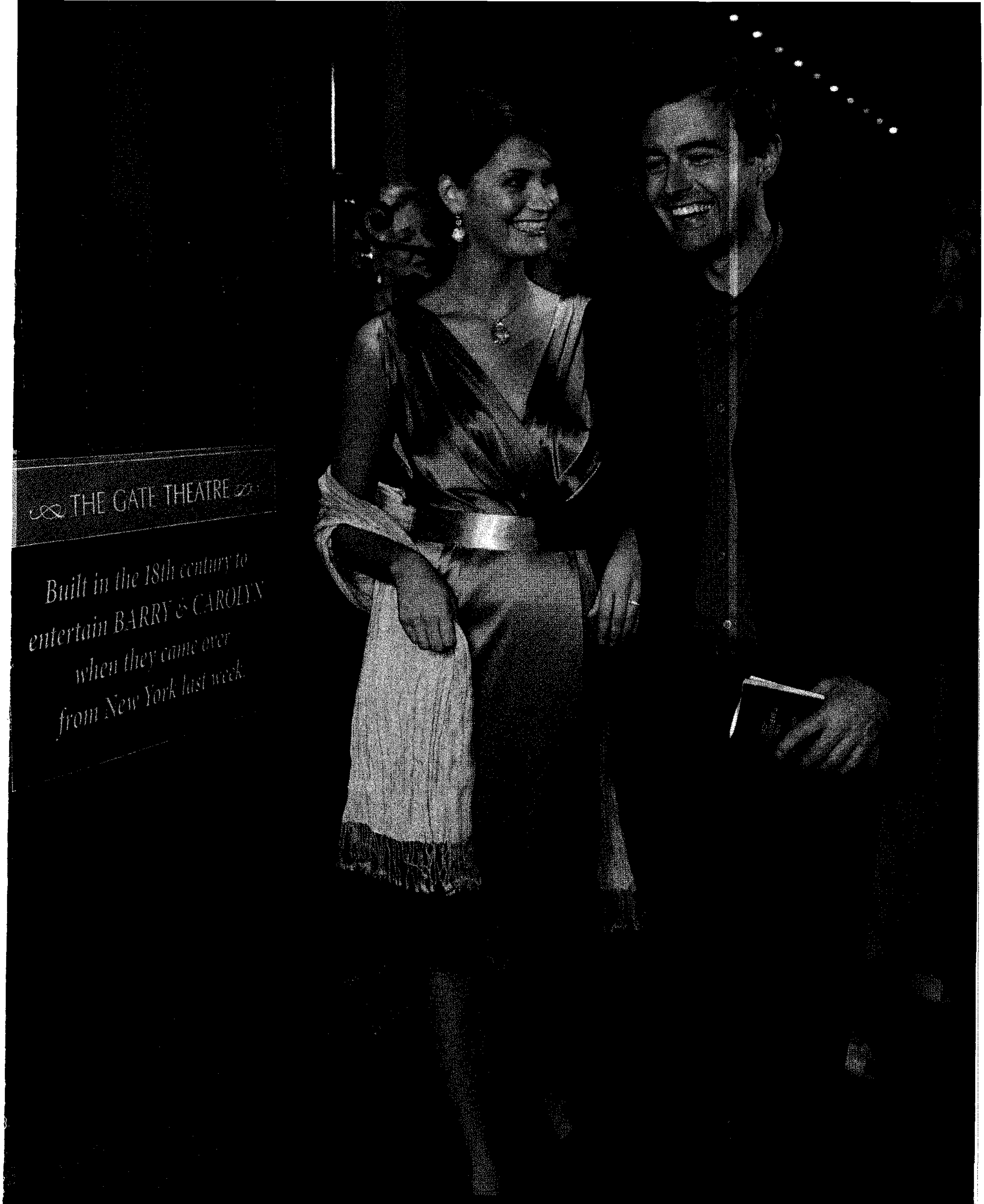
BACHANALIA
The veteran violinist Nina Beilina leads her group in a concert of favorites by Bach (the First Brandenburg Concerto), Rachmaninoff, Morton Gould, and Prokofiev ("Peter and the Wolf," narrated by the redoubtable Robert Sherman). (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. June 13 at 8.)

RECITALS

ROULETTE
The high-tech "festival of mixology" continues its spring series with a concert by the Brooklyn-based sound artist Keiko Uenishi (a.k.a. O.Blaat), who performs "Der Blinde," an audiovisual work (inspired by a story by Elias Canetti) in which a blind man offers a slide show of the pictures he takes to document the sounds around him. (Location One, 20 Greene St. 212-219-8242. June 7 at 8:30. For full schedule, visit www.roulette.org.)

BARGEMUSIC
June 8-9 at 7:30: The cellist Adrian Daurov essays all six of Bach's Suites for Unaccompanied Cello, spread over two programs. ♦ June 10 at 7:30 and June 11 at 4: Large-group concerts, a welcome new trend at the barge, allow a range of superb young performers to show their stuff in music both familiar and obscure. This week's, which features such musicians as the pianist Steven Beck and the violinist Jonathan Gandelsman, features works by Boccherini ("La Musica Notturna di Madrid"), Mozart, Bartók ("Contrasts"), and Brahms (the Clarinet Quintet). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

AMERICAN MUSIC FESTIVAL 2006
Some highlights from the American Composers Alliance-sponsored festival of new and recent music. June 8 at 8: A centenary concert in tribute to the late Miriam Gideon, one of America's first professional female composers, includes works by her and by Lukas Foss ("For Lenny"), Milton Babbitt, and John Melby. ♦ June 10 at 2: The late Princeton pianist Robert Helps, a charming and invaluable presence on the New York scene for several decades, is the honoree of another tribute concert, which features piano trios and chamber works by such composers as David Del Tredici, Mischa Zupko, and Helps. (Thalia Theatre,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COUNTER)INDUCTION: "MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE"

The vital young downtown ensemble (which includes the violist Jessica Meyer and the pianist Blair McMillen), which patiently looks through the results of an open call for scores every year, offers some of its finds in a concert that features diverse works by Keeril Makan, Gregory Mertl, and Caroline Mallonnée ("Throwing Mountains"). (Tenri Cultural Institute, 43A W. 13th St. June 10 at 8. A donation is suggested.)

PETER ORTH

The Naumburg Award-winning pianist performs works by Brahms (the "Handel Variations"), Chopin, and Albéniz ("Iberia," Books I and II). (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. June 10 at 8.)

GLASS FARM ENSEMBLE

Three weeks after Leon Botstein offered canonical works by Schoeck, Martin, and Honegger, this fine new-music ensemble (which includes the pianist Yvonne Troxler and the saxophonist Taimur Sullivan) performs a program of premières by three more Swiss composers, Wolfgang Heiniger, Balz Trümpy ("Im Labyrinth"), and Hans Witschi. (Tenri Cultural Institute, 43A W. 13th St. June 11 at 8. A donation is suggested.)

FRIENDS & ENEMIES OF NEW MUSIC

Piano works dominate the latest concert by the resilient new-music collective, a program in which Jeanne Golan and Marc Peloquin perform pieces by Steven Burke, John Harbison ("Gatsby Études"), David Del Tredici, Eric Moe, and Yehudi Wyner, the winner of the 2006 Pulitzer Prize for music. (Thalia Theatre, Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. June 12 at 8.)

MIDAMERICA PRODUCTIONS CHAMBER MUSIC

The award-winning young Bulgarian violinist Lilia Donkova (with the pianist Helene D. Jeanney) performs music by Mozart, Brahms (the Violin Sonata No. 3 in D Minor), Ravel ("Tzigane"), and Arvo Pärt ("Fratres"), among others. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. June 12 at 8.)

OUT OF TOWN

SOUTH SHORE MUSIC

The long-standing summer concert series in Westport, Connecticut, begins promisingly with a recital by the admired New York clarinettist Jon Manasse, who (with the pianist Noreen Cassidy-Polera) offers works by Brahms (the Clarinet Sonata No. 2 in E-Flat Major), Gershwin (a duo arrangement of the Three Preludes for Piano), and Weber. (Westport Town Hall, 110 Myrtle Ave. 866-776-8745. June 9 at 8.)

HUDSON VALLEY CHAMBER MUSIC CIRCLE

The springtime series, a short schedule featuring big names, continues with a concert by the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio, who perform all three piano trios by Brahms. (Olin Hall, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. 518-537-6665. June 10 at 8.)

MUSIC MOUNTAIN

The festival, the summer shrine of the string quartet, begins its seventy-seventh season with a benefit concert featuring the flutist Eugenia Zukerman and the superb Jacques Thibaud String Trio, performing works by Mozart (the Flute Quartet in D Major, K. 285, and the Divertimento in E-Flat Major), Beethoven (the String Trio in G Major, Op. 9, No. 1), and Tan Mi Zi. (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126. June 11 at 3.)

MOVIES OPENING

AGNES AND HIS BROTHERS

In this comedy, directed by Oskar Roehler, a transgendered man searches for his mother. In German. Opening June 9. (Quad Cinema.)

ANIMALS AND MORE ANIMALS

Nicolas Philibert directed this documentary, about the renovation of Paris's Museum of Natural History. In French. Opening June 7. (Film Forum.)

AUTUMN

A French film noir by an American director, Ra'up McGee, about a hit man with a conscience, starring Laurent Lucas and Irène Jacob. Opening June 9. (Quad Cinema.)

CARS

A Pixar animated comedy about humanized vehicles, with the voices of Paul Newman, Bonnie Hunt, and Owen Wilson. Directed by John Lasseter. Opening June 9. (In wide release.)

CROSSING THE BRIDGE: THE SOUND OF ISTANBUL

Fatih Akin directed this documentary, about a German musician who sets out to discover the music of Istanbul. Opening June 9. (Angelika Film Center.)

THE HEART OF THE GAME

Bill Resler, a college professor and girls' high-school basketball coach, is the subject of this documentary by Ward Serrill. Opening June 9. (Angelika Film Center.)

A PRAIRIE HOME COMPANION

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In wide release.)

NOW PLAYING

AKEELAH AND THE BEE

Doug Atchison's heartfelt drama is centered on Akeelah (the wonderful Keke Palmer), an eleven-year-old who goes from hiding her talent for spelling at her South L.A. middle school all the way to competing in the national spelling bee. Atchison succeeds not only in establishing a genuine sense of place (with the help of funny, unfettered supporting actors, including J. R. Villarreal as Akeelah's wealthy, down-to-earth friend) but also in offering a believable tale of hope. Laurence Fishburne, as Akeelah's spelling coach, turns in an admirably restrained performance, and Palmer exudes poise beyond her years as an emotionally complicated, intelligent girl who must learn to pick her battles, and to fight to win.—*Shauna Lyon* (In wide release.)

THE BREAK-UP

This romantic comedy, directed by Peyton Reed, stars Vince Vaughn, looking a little paunchy, as a hyper-articulate Chicago tour guide with loutish habits, and Jennifer Aniston, looking great naked from the rear, as an art-gallery saleswoman who wants peace and order. They buy a condo together, and quarrels ensue—many quarrels, some of them nicely sustained. The snippy-snappy dialogue is good enough to make you regret that the movie wasn't better thought out as a piece of comic construction. The main trouble: what each one does professionally never feeds into the plot, so we are left, again and again, with nothing but The Relationship. Eventually the two run out of arguments and the movie turns earnest and dull, but there are good bits nonetheless. With Jon Favreau, who renews his onscreen partnership with Vaughn, and Judy Davis as Aniston's dragon-lady boss. Story by Vaughn, Jeremy Garelick, and Jay Lavender; screenplay by Garelick and Lavender.—*David Denby* (In wide release.)

THE CULT OF THE SUICIDE BOMBER

In 2005, Robert Baer, the C.I.A. field officer whose adventures and misadventures served as the basis of George Clooney's character in "Syriana," went around the Middle East with a camera crew, interviewing Lebanese and Israeli intelligence officers and the families of suicide bombers. Between the interviews, Baer and his collaborators, the producer-directors Kevin Toolis and David Batty, drawing on news-agency footage, lay out the historical development of suicide as a weapon—first of war, then of terror. The movie is a grimly fascinating pageant of fanaticism, sacrifice, and death, and the most striking passage comes near the end. Some of the Lebanese and West Bank bombers, it seems, were trailed by cameramen, and the footage they recorded—say, of a car bomber taking out an Israeli military patrol—is later marshalled by terrorist organizations as a recruiting and propaganda tool. Baer collects a group of such "movies," in which real people die, and shows them again and again; by the end of the sequence, we're not sure what is more enraging—the moviemaking terrorists, the blithe idiocy of routine commercial entertainment, in which explosions are decorative fun, or our own complacency in putting up with so much of it.—*D.D.* (Reviewed in our issue of 6/5/06.) (Cinema Village.)

THE DA VINCI CODE

Ron Howard's film of Dan Brown's novel is faithful to both the spirit and the letter of the original. Such loyalty will be balm to the souls of his forty million readers, who have come to accept the book as holy writ. Others will greet the news as they would an outbreak of the plague. The movie stars Tom Hanks as Robert Langdon, an American professor who, partnered with a young French cryptographer (Audrey Tautou), untangles a knot of clues. These begin with a corpse in the Louvre, continue in a country house owned by a conspiracy expert (Ian McKellen), lead to London for a touch of local color, and end in a Scottish church, where the true descendant of Jesus is revealed, to regrettable sounds of mirth in the audience. Our heroes' opponents include a devilish bishop (Alfred Molina) and a murderous monk (Paul Bettany). It should have been possible to mold the nonsense of the novel into brightly colored hokum; instead, Howard, in collusion with his screenwriter, Akiva Goldsman, has chosen to serve up two and a half hours of verbose and joyless gloom. If you can't face watching this movie, you could always pray for it.—*Anthony Lane* (5/29/06) (In wide release.)

ICE AGE: THE MELTDOWN

This second "Ice Age" follows the exploits of Manny the Mammoth (voiced by Ray Romano), Sid the Sloth (John Leguizamo), and Diego the Sabre-Toothed Tiger (Denis Leary) as they flee a potential flood (brought on by global warming) for even icier environs. This improved follow-up to the 2002 animated hit boasts a more nuanced look (the animals' facial expressions are quite lively, and the snowy backgrounds are more detailed), and the romping, stomping screenplay has a brisk anything-goes quality. The high point is a musical number consisting of flying vultures circling their prey and breaking into a Busby Berkeley routine to the tune "Food, Glorious Food." Directed by Carlos Saldanha.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In wide release.)

MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE III

Tom Cruise returns as Ethan Hunt, the superfit secret operative who needs a team of fellow-agents to help him retrieve his missing sense of humor. They must also track down Agent Lindsey Farris (Keri Russell) in Berlin. She has been captured by Owen Davian (Philip Seymour Hoffman), who represents an even greater threat to world stability than Truman Capote. This third installment of the franchise, directed by J. J. Abrams, is the most streamlined to date, with a succession of gargantuan set pieces (the best of them in the Vatican) and dogged attempts to perforate the eardrums of the audience. Little of it makes sense, and the treachery of insiders—a source of worry to Hunt's superiors, played by Laurence Fishburne and Billy Crudup—has become the most wearisome feature of the genre. Toward the end, Abrams seems to run out of juice, and the role of Hunt's new wife (Michelle Monaghan) feels insultingly plaintive and thin. A tip for the next sequel: the closer these movies get to the old TV series, with its indefatigable teamwork, the more gripping they become. The mission was never meant to be a one-man show.—*A.L.* (5/15/06) (In wide release.)

THE NAKED KISS

Samuel Fuller's amazingly lurid, inventive, and engaging 1964 pulp thriller features one of the wildest openings in American film noir, as a prostitute whales away with her pocketbook—right into the camera—at a drunkard who held out on her. Lashing out to defend himself, he pulls off her wig to reveal her egg-bare scalp. This tabloid extravaganza, which Fuller made for a pittance on a real-estate mogul's stake when Hollywood wouldn't have him, is fuelled by the sexual freedom of changing times: it deals openly with prostitution, pimping, and abortion, and features a creepy, minimalist scene of child molestation. Kelly (Constance Towers), a

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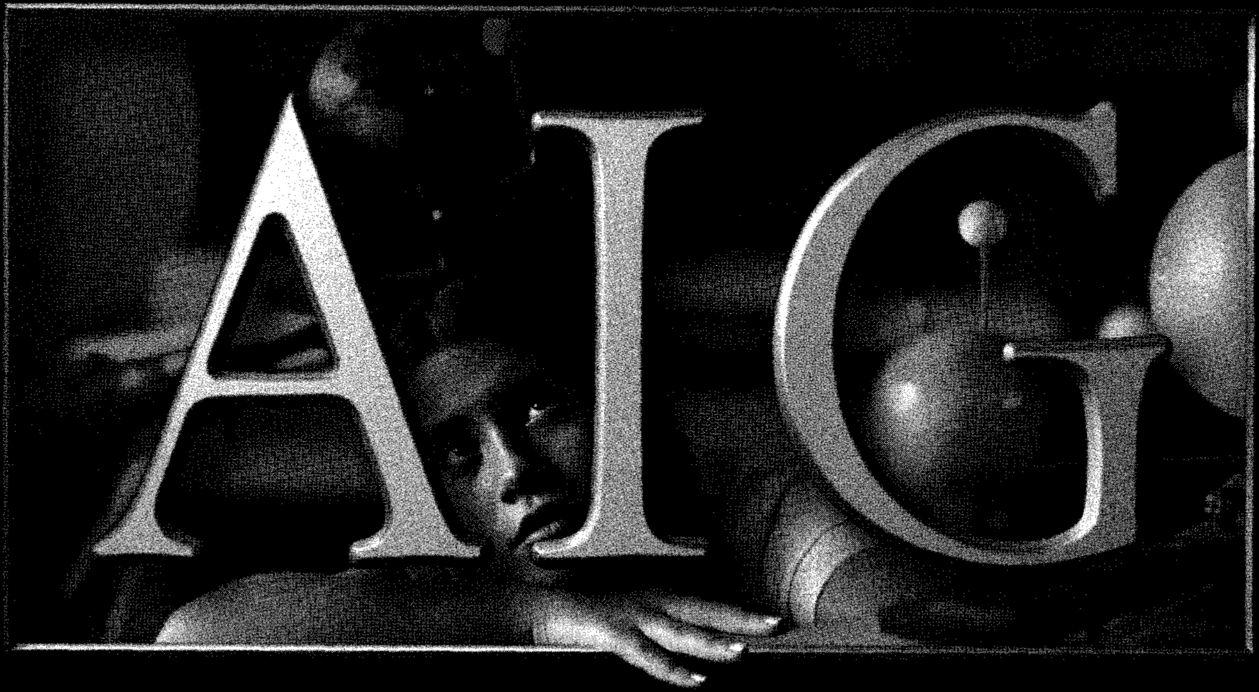

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prostitute posing as a travelling saleswoman, shows up in a small town and soon seeks to change her ways: she becomes a nurse at a children's hospital, a pillar of the community, and the fiancée of the local grandee; but something is rotten in the town of Grantville, and her vigilante response gets her arrested for murder. Though the hysterical story is contrived, Fuller uses its shocking themes to jolt his turgid actors and threadbare images; the effect is like raucous, reckless garage music by someone old enough to know better and desperate enough not to care.—*Richard Brody* (Film Forum; June 7-8.)

THE OMEN (2006)

Despite its stiff artifice, the original 1976 version of this film became a classic by default. John Moore's remake follows it almost scene for scene but raises the visuals to current standards of flash and murk. If Liev Schreiber is as apt a vessel of manly virtues as Gregory Peck, Julia Stiles matches Lee Remick as a blank slate of maternal sacrifice, and Seamus Davey-Fitzpatrick's Damien is a duly robotic cherub, the action is now given even more of a religious slant: the film opens in the Vatican Observatory, where the telescope is put in service of a mortal prophecy that includes the Twin Towers, the new age of war, and Israel. The script has some truly macabre ideas, but they're realized almost entirely through the soundtrack, where bursts of gut-slamming, earsplitting noise compel a physical response though there's little happening onscreen to warrant it. Long, slow, and suspenseless, this stillborn slog seems ready made for instant reincarnation as "Scary Movie 5."—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

OVER THE HEDGE

The Dreamworks animation unit ups the creative ante with this comedy, about a group of hibernating forest creatures who awaken to find that civilization has settled into their own back yard. When the cute-as-a-button animals begin foraging for food in the garbage of the new housing development, the increasingly unhappy residents take exterminator action. Based on comic-strip characters created by Michael Fry and T. Lewis, and directed by Tim Johnson and Karey Kirkpatrick, the movie has a loony, slapstick verve, and the star-studded voice work is uniformly entertaining. Especially good are Wanda Sykes, as Stella the Skunk, Nick Nolte, as Vincent the Bear, and Thomas Haden Church, as the furry creatures' arch-nemesis, known as the Verminator.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

POSEIDON

In his remake of the campy "Poseidon Adventure," the director Wolfgang Petersen, back in the water again, gets down to business quickly: a giant cruise liner gets hit by a rogue wave and turns turtle. The ship's poker-table hustler (Josh Lucas), who mysteriously possesses the precise skills required to lead people through upside-down ocean liners, takes command of a few would-be survivors. What follows is an exciting exercise in fear and hydraulics. No doubt about it: Petersen has a dynamic feel for the rush and heave of water, the pent-up energy, the sheer heft and uncontrollable momentum of the stuff. Mashed, whomped in the face with exploding hatches, bloodied, burned, forcibly gargled again and again, the actors give a good impression of going through hell, and they look genuinely worse for the wear.—*D.D.* (5/22/06) (In wide release.)

THE PROPOSITION

John Hillcoat's sweat-stained movie is set in the Australian outback at the tail end of the nineteenth century. Here, outside a remote settlement, live Captain Morris Stanley (Ray Winstone), the chief of police, and his wife, Martha (Emily Watson), who are striving to maintain a British decorum, complete with Christmas dinner, in an untamable land. Hence the determination with which Stanley pursues the Burns gang—three brothers (Richard Wilson, Guy Pearce, and Danny Huston) who have murdered a local family. The title refers to Stanley's risky offer: if the middle brother can find and kill the eldest and most savage, the youngest will be spared. What ensues is a strange blend of manhunt and tone poem, in which even the most brutal characters seem rapt in the face of red earth and endless sky. The film was written by Nick Cave, who, not surprisingly, supplied the music; the result may feel confused as a narrative, but, as a portrait of a riven culture, bred on racial conflict, it is formidably hard to ignore.—*A.L.* (5/8/06) (Angelika Film Center and Empire 25.)

LA RONDE

Max Ophuls's bittersweet comic sketches of the daisy chain of sexual relations, based on a play by Arthur Schnitzler that symbolized the spread of syphilis, bring to light a more lasting malady: incurable dissatisfaction. In Ophuls's stupendous opening scene, a balletic five-minute tracking shot, a master of ceremonies (Anton Walbrook) effortlessly guides the story across the fourth wall, exchanging his trenchcoat for top hat and tails as he flits from 1950 Paris to 1900 Vienna to set the stage for erotic dreams that are played out, gaily but joylessly, against a backdrop of graceful manners and gaudy amusements. The ten serial lovers, from the prostitute in search of tenderness (Simone Signoret) and the soldier seeking conquest (Serge Reggiani) to the young poet dreaming of fame (Jean-Louis Barrault) and the aging actress needing financial security (Isa Miranda), all use sex to pursue their aims, and all get mostly sex. Which, Ophuls admits, isn't the worst short-term distraction. In French.—*R.B.* (Moving Image; June 10-11.)

RUSSIAN DOLLS

Romain Duris plays Xavier, a thirtyish cipher, who, along with Wendy (Kelly Reilly), was among the seven characters in "L'Auberge Espagnole" (2002), a friendly, lightweight comedy about a group of young people from all over Europe spending a year together as roommates in a Barcelona flat. At the end of the movie, Xavier goes back to Paris, where, a few years later, his life has become a pointless mess. A hack journalist and screenwriter, he doesn't seem to know what he wants to write, or who he is, or which woman he wants to make love to. He teams up with Wendy in London on a screenplay but can't give up a beautiful model with pouty lips (Lucy Gordon). The movie offers touristic views of Paris and St. Petersburg and many pretty faces and bodies; it's pleasant and fast-moving, but you may want to brain the slightly vacuous hero for not recognizing that the extraordinary woman right in front of him is the only woman in the world. Written and directed by Cédric Klapisch. In English, Russian, French, Spanish, and Italian.—*D.D.* (5/22/06) (IFC Center.)

SCARY MOVIE 4

Not as uproarious as No. 3, the new and sodden installment in the series lays bare the perils of parody. The director David Zucker and his screenwriters hang their garlands of pop-culture takeoffs (on "Saw," "The Village," "The Grudge," Tom Cruise on "Oprah," and much, much more) on a throughline that spoofs "War of the Worlds," and it doesn't work. The sendup seems all too similar to the Spielberg fantasy, and to a real attack; no amount of Three Stooges-like shenanigans and bathroom humor, even when funny, dulls the sting. But Anna Faris, whose stratospheric ditz quotient is somewhere between that of Thelma Todd and Judy Holliday, proves again that she has far better things awaiting her.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

STICK IT

Writer-director Jessica Bendinger here does for gymnastics even more than what she did for cheerleading as the screenwriter of "Bring It On": she sells it to teens put off by its balletic prissiness and finicky judging. Missy Peregrym, whose name belies shoulders that would do a defensive lineman proud, plays Haley Graham, a tough girl who is caught trespassing and sent to a strict gymnastics camp run by a legendary martinet, Burt Vickerman (Jeff Bridges). Their contentious relationship, sealed by Peregrym's contained fury and Bridges's understated drawl through a perpetual wad of gum, is potentially serious stuff that is seriously out of place amidst the whipped-cream antics of the other teens. Bendinger is not much of a director (her camera tricks show little of the sport itself), but she has clearly thought a lot about kids: in a surprising ending, she cuts the very concept of athletic competition down to size. An awkward, surprisingly ambitious, endearing failure.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

STRIKE

Sergei Eisenstein's pulsating first feature, about a strike in a Russian factory, caused another brilliant Soviet director, Grigori Kozintsev, to remark:

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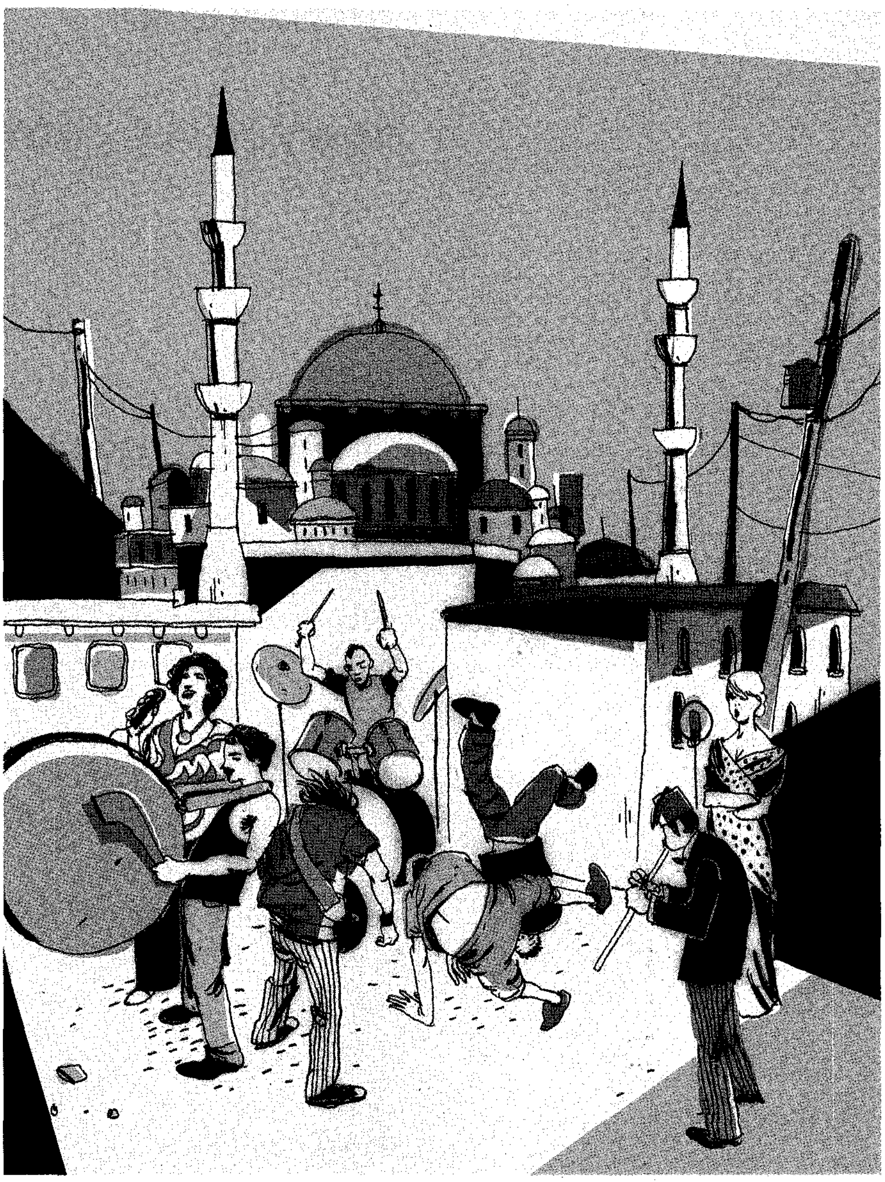
"All that we've been doing up to now is baby stuff." Eisenstein went straight from working in the Proletkult Theatre to making this revolutionary anthem, and whole sections are designed to show off virtuoso stagecraft. The theatre tricks are nonetheless compelling. And at the start of his filmmaking career, Eisenstein already had a fierce kinetic sense, a picture-maker's eye, and a peerless instinct for intensifying shock, suspense, and emotion with dynamic editing. The surging confrontations between the proletariat and the police are justly celebrated. The film is equally powerful when Eisenstein suggests escalating tensions through shadowy, rippling imagery or when he hinges massive scenes on emotion-charged details—like the strap of a humiliated factory employee who's getting ready to hang himself. Cinematography by Edouard Tissé. Silent, with Russian intertitles.—*Michael Sragow* (Anthology Film Archives; June 9.)



"Crossing the Bridge: The Sound of Istanbul," directed by Fatih Akin, opens June 9.

JOSH COCHRAN

UNITED 93

Paul Greengrass's account of how a single group of passengers, almost certain of death, decided on the morning of September 11, 2001, to fight back against hijackers on a suicide mission turns out to be—after much public anxiety about potential "exploitation"—an example of one-hundred-per-cent professional filmmaking. Greengrass's movie is tightly wrapped, unrelenting, and, no matter how exciting, superbly precise. For this story of semi-anonymous group heroism, he uses actual professionals (pilots, flight attendants, an air-traffic controller) mixed in with largely unknown actors, and avoids visual or verbal rhetoric. The handheld camera is an active participant in everything that's going on—and still manages to see what it needs to see out of the corner of its eye. The avoidance of front-and-center staging makes us feel the uncertainty of an unprecedented situation. This is true existential filmmaking; in the end, the viewer's dread is released in mad exhilaration as the passengers charge the hijackers with the force of engorged water breaking through a dam.—*D.D.* (5/1/06) (In wide release.)

X-MEN: THE LAST STAND

Brett Ratner, taking over as director of the airborne "X-Men" franchise from Bryan Singer, ignores the liquid beauty and poetic fantasy of Singer's work and trashes his actors by repeatedly slamming them around or leaving them stranded. It's a gruelling, repetitive piece of work, much of it execrably staged. Where is it written that computer-generated imagery has to be used to extend the violence of comic-book plots? Bring on the aesthetes. With Ian McKellen, used more centrally than before, and in good voice; Patrick Stewart, Hugh Jackman, Famke Janssen, and the body, Rebecca Romijn, regrettably killed off before we can get more than a look at her.—*D.D.* (6/5/06) (In wide release.)

Also Playing

AN AMERICAN HAUNTING: In wide release. **COASTLINES:** IFC Center. **DISTRICT B13:** In wide release. **THE WILD:** In wide release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—"NewFilmmakers." June 7 at 7: Short-film program. ♦ June 7 at 8: "Begging Your Pardon" (2004, Donna White). ♦ "Essential Cinema." June 7 at 7:30: Short films by Ian Hugo, Larry Jordan, Helen Levitt, and Willard Maas (1943-68). ♦ June 9 at 8: "Strike" (†). ♦ June 10 at 4: "October" (1928, Sergei Eisenstein; silent, with Russian intertitles). ♦ June 10 at 7: "Battleship Potemkin" (1925, Eisenstein; silent, with Russian intertitles). ♦ June 11 at 4:30: "Old and New" (1929, Eisenstein; silent, with Russian intertitles). ♦ June 11 at 7: "Alexander Nevsky" (1938, Eisenstein; in Russian, no subtitles). ♦ Special screenings. June 8 at 7:30: "The Birth of a Nation" (1973, Klaus Wyborny). ♦ The Films of Larry Gottheim. June 8 at 8: Program One, early films (1969-71). ♦ June 9 at 7: "Horizons" (1971-73). ♦ June 9 at 9: "Mouches Volantes" (1976). ♦ June 10 at 6: "Four Shadows" (1978). ♦ June 10 at 8: "Tree of Knowledge" (1980). ♦ June 11 at 6: Short-film program (1983-1987). ♦ June 11 at 8: Program Seven, later films and new work (1989-2005).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—Through June 29: The films of Michelangelo Antonioni. June 7-8 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15, June 9 at 2, 4:30, and 9:15, June 10-11 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15, and June 12-13 at 4:30 and 9:15: "Blow-Up" (1966). ♦ June 9 at 6:50: "The Vanquished" (1952; in Italian). ♦ June 12-13 at 7: Short films (1943-53).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. June 7-13 at 1, 3:45, 6:45, and 9:30: "Army of Shadows" (1969, Jean-Pierre Melville; in French). ♦ Through June 15: "B Noir." June 7 at 1:30, 5:20, and 9:10 and June 8 at 1:30 and 5:20: "Underworld, U.S.A." (1961, Samuel Fuller). ♦ June 7 at 3:30 and 7:20 and June 8 at 3:30: "The Naked Kiss" (†). ♦ June 9-10 at 1:30, 5:30, and 9:30: "The Phenix City Story" (1955, Phil Karlson). ♦ June 9-10 at 3:30 and 7:30: "Kansas City Confidential" (1952, Karlson). ♦ June 11 at 1, 4:10, 7:20, and 10:30: "Man in the Dark" (1953, Lew Landers; in 3-D). ♦ June 11 at 2:30, 5:40, and 8:50: "D.O.A." (1950, Rudolph Maté). ♦ June 12 at 1, 4:20, and 7:40: "The Brothers Rico" (1957, Karlson). ♦ June 12 at 2:50, 6:10, and 9:30: "The Undercover Man" (1949, Joseph H. Lewis). ♦ June 13 at 1:10, 4:35, and 8: "The Lineup" (1958, Don Siegel). ♦ June 13 at 2:55, 6:20, and 9:45: "Murder by Contract" (1958, Irving Lerner). ♦ Special event. June 8 at 7:30: An Evening with Jane Powell and Dick Moore.

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through June 27: The films of Michel Brault. June 13 at 12:30, 4, and 7: "Drifting Upstream" (1967; in French) and "La Lutte" (1961; in French).

IFC CENTER

323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—The Films of Akira Kurosawa. June 9-11 at noon: "Dersu Uzala" (1975; in Russian). ♦ "Waverly Midnights." June 9-10: "Cleopatra Jones" (1973, Jack Starrett).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—Through June 21: "To Save and Project." June 7 at 6 and June 11 at 1: "Ostia" (1970, Sergio Citti; in Italian). ♦ June 7 at 8 and June 11 at 3:15: "Notes on an African Oresteia" (1970, Pier Paolo Pasolini; in Italian). ♦ June 7 at 8:15: "Ganja and Hess" (1973, Bill Gunn). ♦ June 9 at 5:30: "War Be Cursed" (1914, Alfred Machin; silent) and short films. ♦ June 9 at 7:30: "The Emigrants" (1971, Jan Troell; in Swedish). ♦ June 10 at 1 and June 12 at 5:30: "The Coward" (1965, Satyajit Ray; in Bengali) and "The Holy Man" (1965, Ray; in Bengali). ♦ June 10 at 2: "Le Coupable" (1917, André Antoine; silent). ♦ June 10 at 4: "Rat Trap" (1981, Adoor Gopalakrishnan; in Malayalam). ♦ June 10 at 4: "Mademoiselle de la Seiglière" (1919-21, Antoine; silent). ♦ June 10 at 6: "La Terre" (1919-21, Antoine; silent). ♦ June 10 at 8: "L'Arlésienne" (1922, Antoine; silent). ♦ June 11 at 3: Short silent films from the Joye Collection (1900-14). ♦ June 11 at 5: "Il Canale Degli Angeli" (1934, Francesco Passinetti; in Italian). ♦ June 12 at 6: "The Movie Actor" (1932, Bruno Vallety) and "Santa Lucia Luntana" (1931, Harold Godsoe). ♦ June 12 at 7:45: "House of Strangers" (1949, Joseph Mankiewicz). ♦ June 12 at 8:15: "M" (1931, Fritz Lang; in German). ♦ Films from CalArts. June 7 at 6:30: Short Pixar films (1988-2000). ♦ "Women's Film Preservation Fund." June 9 at 6:15: Short films, including "Meditation on Violence" (1948, Maya Deren). ♦ June 9 at 8: "A Fool and His Money" (1912, Alice Guy-Blaché; silent) and "The Blot" (1921, Lois Weber; silent). ♦ Through June 29: The Films of James Mangold. June 11 at 1: "Cop Land" (1997). ♦ TV Commercials. June 11 at 5: "The AICP Show" (2006).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—In première, at the Directors Guild Theatre, 110 W. 57th St. June 8 at 7:30: "A Prairie Home Companion" (2006, Robert Altman), followed by a discussion with the director. For ticket information, call 718-784-4520. ♦ Special screening. June 9 at 7:30: "Hidden Inside Mountains" (2005, Laurie Anderson), presented by the director. ♦ Through July 9: The Films of Stanley Kubrick. June 10-11 at 2: "Killer's Kiss" (1955). The June 10 screening will be introduced by the actress Chris Chase. ♦ June 10-11 at 4: "The Killing" (1956) and "The Day of the Fight" (1951). The June 10 screening will include a lecture by Vincent LoBrutto. ♦ June 10-11 at 6:30: "La Ronde" (†).

NEWFEST

34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St. (646-797-9947)—Selected screenings. For further information, go to www.newfest.org. June 7 at 10:15: "Go West" (2005, Ahmed Imamovic; in Bosnian). ♦ June 8 at 6: "Tang Tang" (2004, Zhang Hanzi; in Mandarin). ♦ June 9 at 10: "Two Drifters" (2005, João Pedro Rodrigues; in Portuguese). ♦ June 9 at 10:30 and June 11 at 1:30: "Vacationland" (2006, Todd Verow).

PIONEER THEATRE

155 E. 3rd St. (212-591-0434)—Special screenings. June 7 at 7: "Motorcycle" (2006, Paul Gordon). ♦ June 7 at 9: "Long Knives Night" (1999, Victor Dashuk; in Russian and Belarusian) and "Reporting from the Rabbit Hole" (2001, Dashuk; in Russian and Belarusian). ♦ June 8-9 and June 12-13 at 7 and 9 and June 10-11 at 5, 7, and 9: "Psychopathia Sexualis" (2006, Bret Wood). ♦ June 9 at 11: "Carrie" (1976, Brian De Palma). ♦ June 10 at 7: "Pornstar Pets" (2005, Margie Schnibbe). ♦ June 11 at 7: Mormon short films (1964-77). ♦ June 12 at 7: "Insecticidal" (2005, Jeffrey Lando). ♦ June 13 at 7: Short films by Robert Altman, presented by the director.

SUNSHINE CINEMA

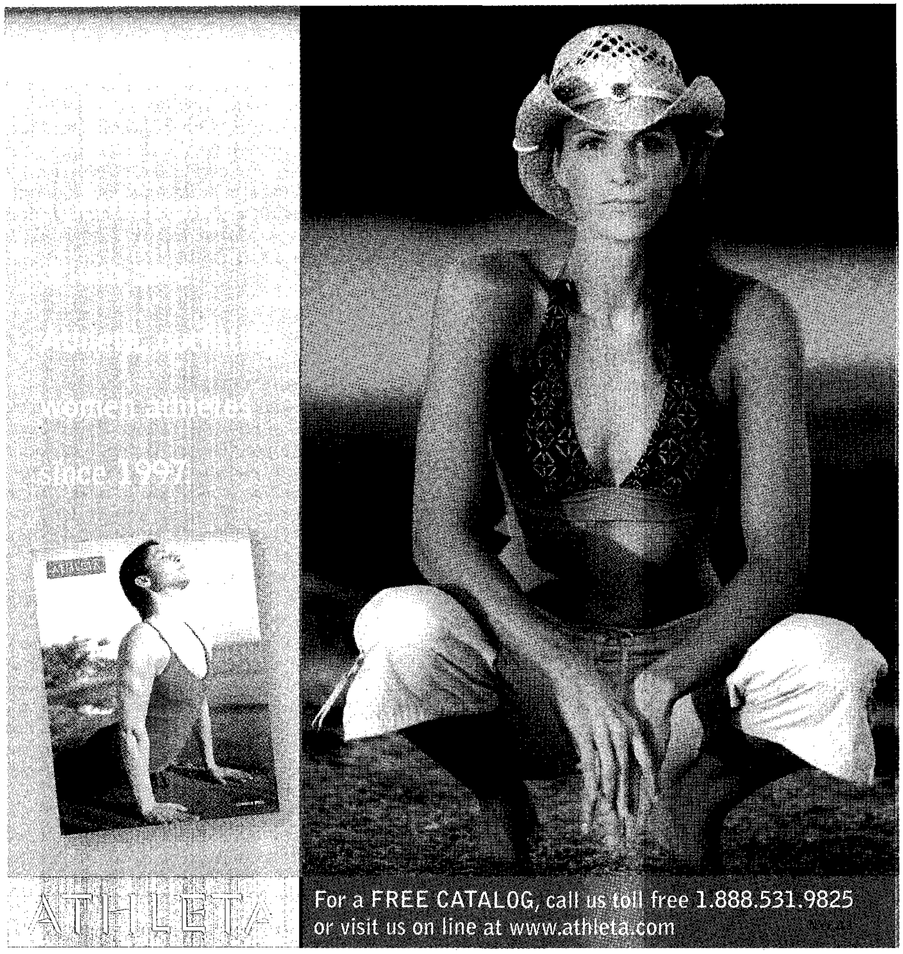
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—"Sunshine@Midnight." June 9-10: "Spaceballs" (1987, Mel Brooks).

THALIA THEATRE

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—In revival. June 11 at 3 and June 13 at 4:30: "Born Yesterday" (1950, George Cukor). ♦ June 11 at 5 and June 13 at 6:30: "Transamerica" (2005, Duncan Tucker).

WALTER READE THEATRE

Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—"Open Roads: New Italian Films." All films are in Italian. June 7 at 2: "The Goodbye Kiss" (2006, Michele Soavi). ♦ June 7 at 4:15: "Fire at Me" (2006, Lamberto Lambertini). ♦ June 7 at 6:30: "La Terra" (2006, Sergio Rubini). ♦ June 7 at 8:45: "Sacred Heart" (2005, Ferzan Ozpetek). ♦ June 8 at 1: "Quo Vadis, Baby?" (2005, Gabriele Salvatores). ♦ June 8 at 3: "Along the Ridge" (2006, Kim Rossi Stuart). ♦ Through June 22: Human Rights Watch International Film Festival. June 9 at 1:30 and 6:30, June 10 at 4:30, and June 13 at 3: "The Camden 28" (2006, Anthony Giacchino). ♦ June 9 at 4, June 10 at 7, June



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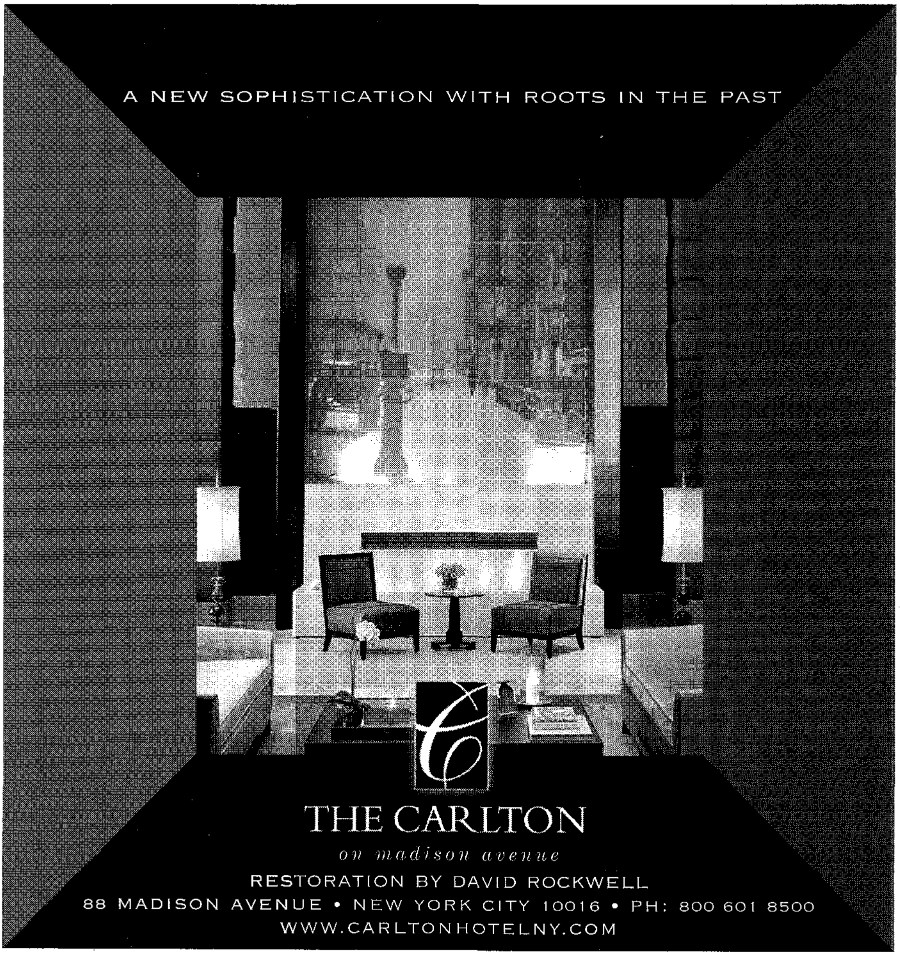

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11 at 4, and June 12 at 2: "Black Gold" (2006, Nick Francis and Mark Francis; in Amharic, Oromiffa, and English). ♦ June 9 at 9:15, June 11 at 8:45, and June 12 at 4: "Dreaming Lhasa" (2005, Ritu Sarin and Tenzing Sonam; in Tibetan and English). ♦ June 10 at 1 and June 12 at 6: "The Forest for the Trees" (2006, Bernadine Mellis) and "Total Denial" (2006, Milena Kaneva). ♦ June 10 at 9:30 and June 13 at 1: "Dias de Santiago" (2003, Josué Mendez; in Spanish). ♦ June 11 at 1: "Iraq in Fragments" (2006, James Longley; in Arabic and Kurdish). ♦ June 11 at 6:30: "Source" (2005, Martin Marecek and Martin Skalsky; in Russian, English, and Azerbaijani). ♦ June 12 at 9:30: "Shadya" (2005, Roy Westler; in Hebrew and Arabic) and "They Call Me Muslim" (2005, Diana Ferrero; in French, English, and Farsi).

READINGS AND TALKS

"FREAKONOMICS"
The economist Steven D. Levitt and the journalist Stephen J. Dubner read from their unconventional analysis of everything from drug dealing to parenting. (Barnes & Noble, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. No tickets necessary. June 7 at 12:30.)

NATIONAL ARTS CLUB
The poets Marie Howe and Catherine Barnett join the novelist Pauls Toutonghi for readings from their work. (15 Gramercy Park S. No tickets necessary. June 8 at 7.)

92ND STREET Y
The actress Lorraine Bracco, who plays a psychiatrist on "The Sopranos," talks with Dr. Gail Saltz about her own bout with depression. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. June 8 at 8.)

JVC JAZZ FESTIVAL
Andrew Homzy, a professor of jazz studies at Concordia University, introduces two films—"Mingus" (1968) and "Other Voices: The Meditations of Charles Mingus" (1964)—about the legendary bassist. Following the screenings, his widow, Sue Mingus, will address the audience. This event kicks off a week of jazz-related films and discussions at Makor. (35 W. 67th St. 212-601-1000. June 13 at 7:30.)

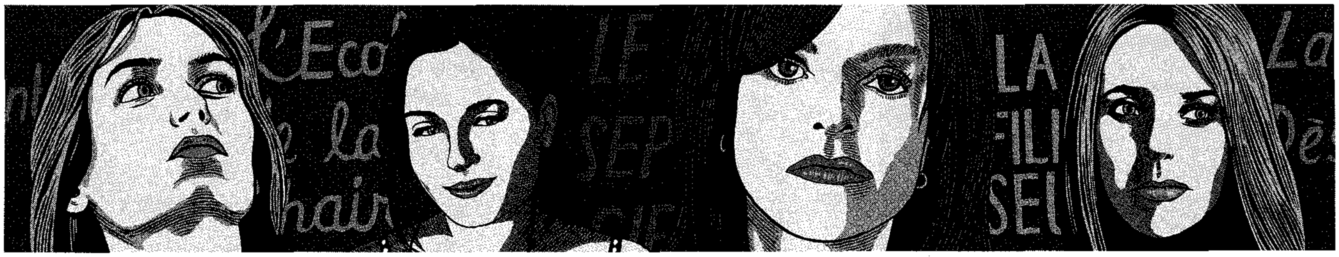
ABOVE AND BEYOND

"WALK ON WHITE STREET"
Four neighboring cultural institutions located on the same street in Tribeca—the Battery Dance Company, the Blue Coyote Theatre Group, Manhattan Children's Theatre, and the Soho Photo Gallery—present a day of free workshops, lectures, performances, and classes. (For more information, visit www.walkonwhite.com or call 646-309-2598. June 10, from 11 to 11.)

"BIG APPLE BARBECUE BLOCK PARTY"
Madison Square Park is the place for ribs, brisket, pulled pork, and other savory delights as more than ten of the nation's top pit masters—showcasing everything from Texas-style to Memphis-style barbecue—set up camp for two days. And there's music to match, with performances by, among others, the country rocker Jimmie Dale Gilmore, on the first night, and the soul singer Bettye LaVette, on the second. (Fifth Ave. at 23rd St. For more information, visit www.bigapplebbq.org. June 10-11.)

MUSEUM MILE FESTIVAL
On June 13, from 6 to 9, Fifth Avenue from 82nd to 105th Streets becomes a vehicle-free stage, complete with bands and performance artists, as nine of the city's top museums—from the Metropolitan to El Museo del Barrio—open their doors for the evening. (For more information, visit www.museummilefestival.org.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
Christie's jewelry sale on June 8 offers the usual assortment of glittering emeralds, sapphires, and rubies, not to mention diamonds, just the thing for the next gala or opening. June 13 is devoted to twentieth-century decorative art works, including several Tiffany lamps and a wonderful Art Deco bronze-and-alabaster sconce in which a bird's long, forked tail becomes the structural support for translucent, faintly Cubist alabaster wings. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ Amid scores of rings, bracelets, and necklaces, the odd tiara, table clock, or gold mesh scarf (by Yuri Chihashi) adds some variety to **Sotheby's** auction of jewels on June 7, which is followed on June 8 by a sale of elegant watches and clocks. Burgundies and bordeaux of the finest vintages (including Château Mouton Rothschild and Château Lafite 1982) top the selection at a sale of wines on June 10. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ **Phillips** divides its summer design sale (June 7) into two categories: design and design art. The first features stylish stuff you can use, like tables, dressers, and chairs. The second is more high-concept, featuring pieces that "aggressively lean toward form," like Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec's "Lit Clos," a bedroom on stilts made out of polyester-resin-coated wood and aluminum. (450 W. 15th St. 212-940-1200.) ♦ Nineteenth- and twentieth-century decorations and furnishings have their day at **Doyle's** Belle Époque sale on June 7. (175 E. 87th St. 212-427-2730.)



ON THE HORIZON

CLASSICAL MUSIC
SCHOOL TIES
June 10

The Norfolk Chamber Music Festival, an admired series whose Ivy League origins give it a classy, old-fashioned ambience, begins with a program slightly out of the classical orbit—a gala concert with the Dave Brubeck Quartet. (Norfolk, Conn. 860-542-3000.)

MOVIES
EYE FOR THE LADIES
June 25–July 11

Benoît Jacquot's best films seem to have been made with a leer at the actresses (Judith Godrèche, Virginie Ledoyen, Sandrine Kiberlain, Isabelle Huppert) who inspired them, as if writing his intricate scripts were a canny method for holding his inner desires at bay. "La Désenchantée" (starring Godrèche) and "La Fille Seule" (with Ledoyen) are among those in the Walter Reade Theatre's mini-retrospective. (212-875-5600.)

ART
CREEPY CRAWLIES
July 1–Jan. 7, 2007

The American Museum of Natural History has developed a talent for creating live-animal exhibits geared primarily toward children; the newest, "Snakes and Lizards Alive!," has more than sixty specimens, ranging from Burmese pythons to red spitting cobras. (212-769-5100.)

DANCE
PROMISED LAND
July 10–30

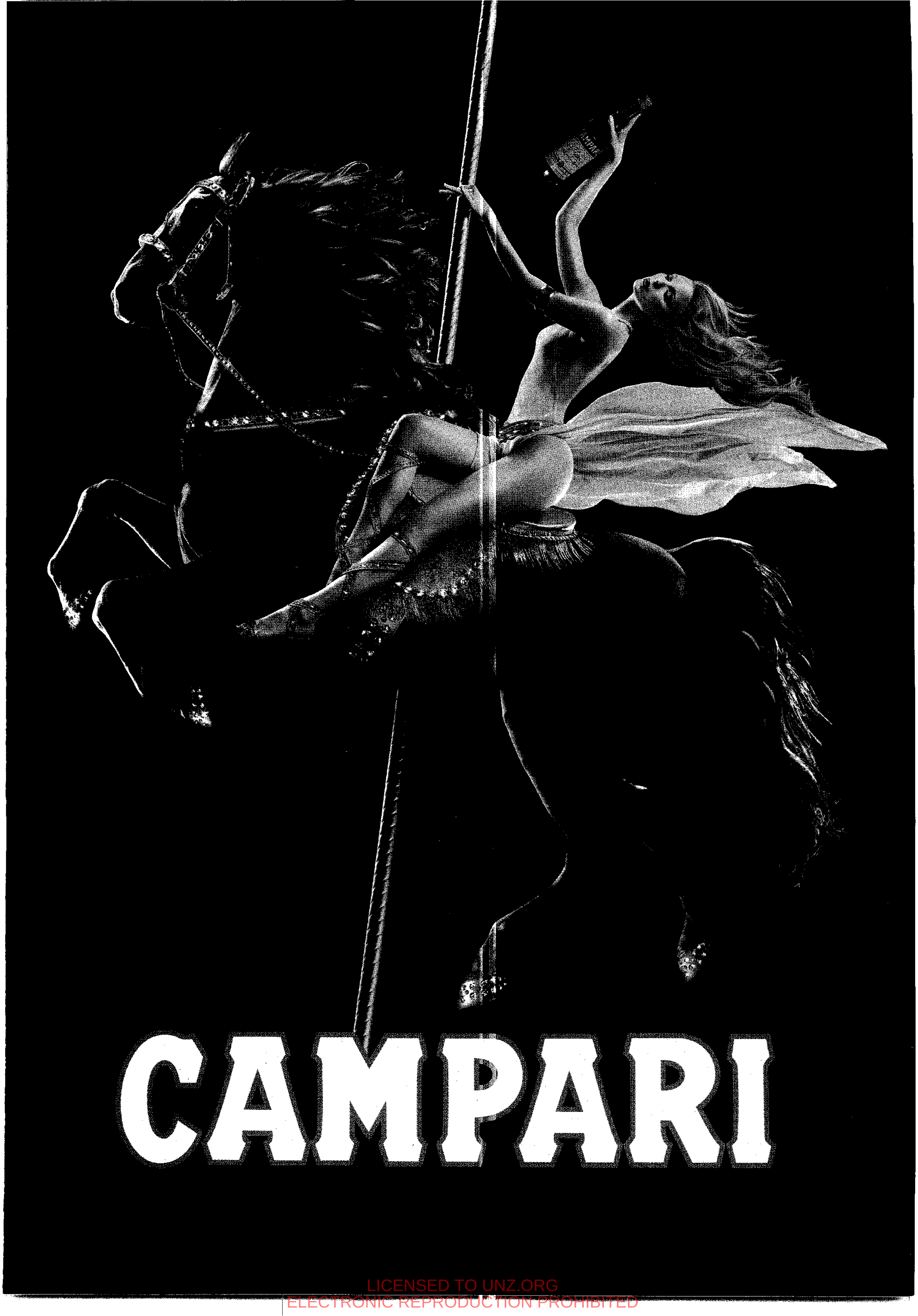
This year's Lincoln Center Festival includes more than a dozen premières by such companies as the Israeli-based Emanuel Gat Dance, Batsheva Dance Company, and Yasmeen Godder and the Bloody Bench Players. (212-721-6500.)

NIGHT LIFE
THE X-MEN
July 21

The Brazilian brothers Arnaldo and Sergio Dias Baptista have reconvened their psychedelic rock band Os Mutantes for a handful of U.S. dates, including one at Webster Hall. This is the group's first tour since their mid-seventies demise, which came about, reportedly, because one of them (Sergio) preferred Fender guitars, while the other (Arnaldo) insisted on Gibsons. (212-353-1600.)

The films of Benoît Jacquot, at the Walter Reade Theatre.

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN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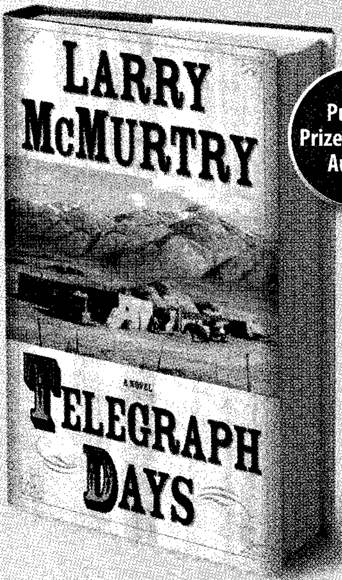
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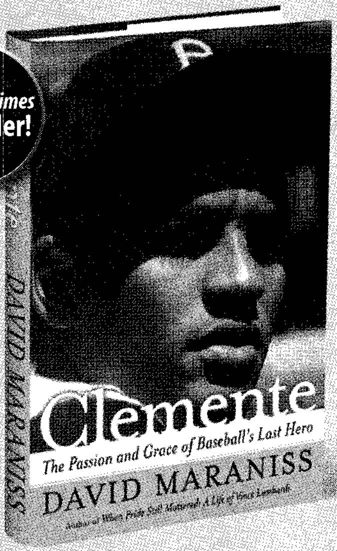
TELEGRAPH DAYS

Pulitzer Prize-winning Author!

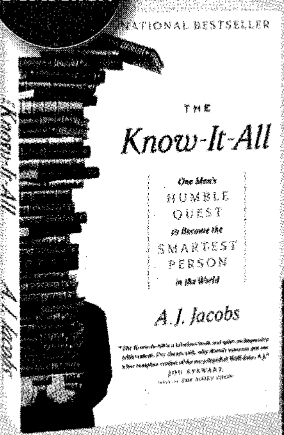
"One of America's most cinematic authors."
—*Newsweek*

New York Times Bestseller!

"The best baseball book of 2006 so far."
—*The Sacramento Bee*

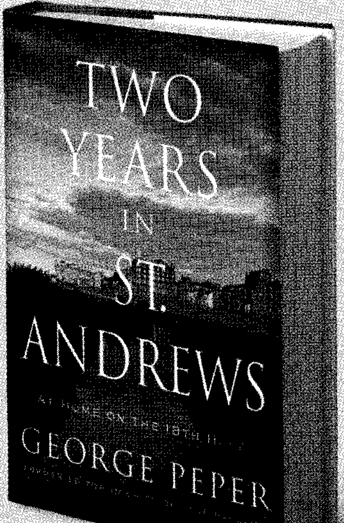

Clemente
The Passion and Grace of Baseball's Last Hero
DAVID MARANISS
DAVID MARANISS

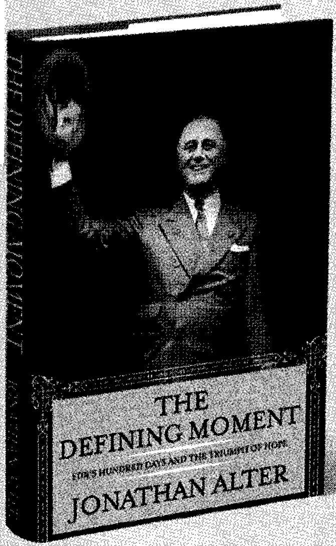
New York Times Bestseller!


NATIONAL BESTSELLER
THE
Know-It-All
One Man's HUMBLE QUEST to Become the SMARTEST PERSON in the World
A. J. Jacobs
Know-It-All
A. J. Jacobs

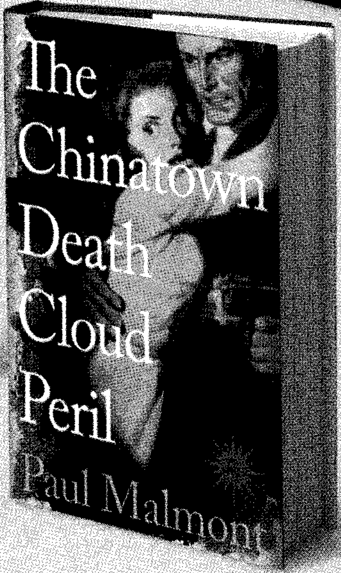
"Hilarious... so stuffed with nutritious bits of trivia you feel smart for reading it."
—Joel Stein, *Time*

For anyone who has ever dreamed of golfing the Old Course, this memoir is the next best thing.


TWO YEARS IN ST. ANDREWS
GEORGE PEPER


THE DEFINING MOMENT
FDR'S HUNDRED DAYS AND THE TRIUMPH OF HOPE
JONATHAN ALTER
THE DEFINING MOMENT

"Riveting."
—David Herbert Donald, author of *Lincoln*


The Chinatown Death Cloud Peril
Paul Malmont

"Pulp fiction at its best."
—Glen David Gold, author of *Carter Beats the Devil*

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FROM EAST TO WEST

For summer travellers, a selection of museum shows around the world.

ASIA: BEIJING

FACTORY 798

When state-owned manufacturing started to decline in China, in the nineteen-eighties, the semi-abandoned warehouses and workshops of Factory 798, an electronics plant built in the nineteen-fifties, were ripe for a SoHo-style takeover by Beijing's growing artist community. Now 798 is the epicenter of the thriving Dashanzi Arts District, with studios, galleries, lofts, bookstores, clubs, and restaurants. Maoist slogans and murals are still preserved on the factory's soaring arches, but they've taken on an ironic/nostalgic flavor amid the performance-art stunts, fashion shows, and exhibitions of neon sculpture. Look for work by Liu Xiaodong and Yu Hong, married painters who live in the district.

PALACE MUSEUM

The Forbidden City, constructed in the early fifteenth century and home to emperors of the Ming and Qing dynasties, is now a repository of state treasures, open to the public. There are flashes of socialist spirit, as when jade carvings and blue-and-white porcelain vases from Qing-era kilns share the stage with Neolithic clay pots, but this is mainly a collection of precious art works and artifacts, often encrusted with gold and jewels. A gallery of timepieces includes clocks made in imperial workshops to accommodate both Eastern and Western methods of keeping time; miniature watches inlaid with diamonds; and clocks with chimes that imitate birdsong.

HONG KONG

HONG KONG MUSEUM OF ART

Established in 1962, the museum is devoted to collecting and preserving the painting, sculpture, and ceramics of Hong Kong. ♦ **"Auspicious Emblems: Chinese Cultural Treasures."** This exhibit celebrates the forty-fifth anniversary of the Min Chiu Society, which promotes Chinese cultural heritage. Among the works are paintings and calligraphy, jade, ceramics, glass, lacquerware, and enamelware, as well as bamboo, wood, and ivory carvings. Through July 19. ♦ **"The World of the Etruscans."** As part of the "Year of Italy," now under way in China, this show presents more than two hundred pieces of pottery, bronzeware, and jewelry. Through Sept. 10.

SEOUL

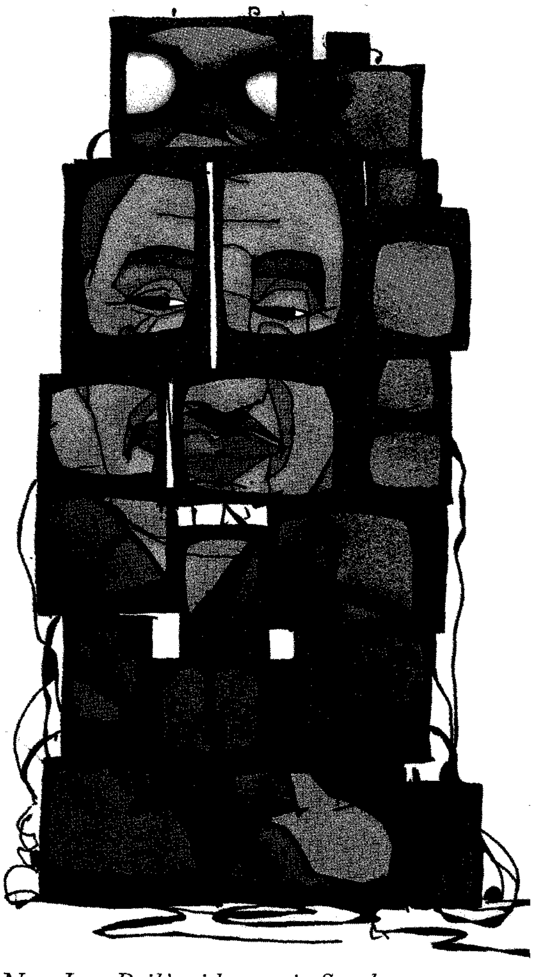
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

Patterned after a traditional Korean fortress, the museum has stood at its current location, in Gwacheon-si, on the outskirts of Seoul, since 1984. The painting galleries begin with the birth of modern Korean painting, in the first decades of the twentieth century, and continue through the experimental work that sprang up in the nineteen-seventies, which reintegrated traditional India-ink techniques. A large first-floor gallery of video art includes work by Nam June Paik, the Korean-born master of the medium, who died earlier this year, and pieces by non-Korean artists whom he influenced, such as Bill Viola. ♦ **"Chu Kyung: In Celebration of the 100th Anniversary of His Birth."** Through July 30.

SHANGHAI

SHANGHAI ART MUSEUM

Situated in the former Shanghai Race Club (where equestrian details still abound, despite a thorough renovation of the original structure and its handsome clock tower), the museum's five stories of galleries display permanent collections of both modern and traditional art. More and more, though, the SAM is leaving ancient art to the Shanghai Museum (which moved into a grand new building shaped like a ceremonial cooking pot several years ago) and looking to the future, with shows of contemporary photography, video, painting, and sculpture. Since 1996, it has hosted a contemporary-art biennial; this year's incarnation opens Sept. 5.



Nam June Paik's video art, in Seoul.

JEROEN KOOLHAAS

SINGAPORE

SINGAPORE ART MUSEUM

This museum, one of the newest in the region—it opened in 1996, in a restored nineteenth-century mission school—is also one of the most aggressive when it comes to showing work by Southeast Asian modern and contemporary artists. ♦ **"Fiction@Love."** A whimsical treatment of the myths and realities of love, featuring pop-culture and contemporary art works ranging from anime drawings to kinetic sculptures to video installations. Artists include the media collective fFurious (from Singapore), Chen Fei and Gao Xiaowu (from China), and Ai Yamaguchi (from Japan). Through July 2. ♦ **"Beneath the Pavement: Discovering the City."** A yearlong exhibition that focusses on urban change in Singapore and neighboring cities, as seen through the eyes of artists. Through January, 2007.

TOKYO

TOKYO NATIONAL MUSEUM

Founded in 1872, this is Japan's oldest museum, and its collection of Japanese art—Ukiyo-e prints, archeological artifacts, kimonos and textiles, and armor and swords used by samurai—is the world's largest. The Horyuji Treasures, precious relics from a Buddhist temple founded in 607 by Prince Shotoku, were long housed in a cement-block building that was open only one day a week, and then only when conditions were considered safe for the art inside: not too muggy or too hot. Since 1999, though, the treasures have been shown in stylish, state-of-the-art galleries designed by Yoshio Taniguchi, the architect of the new Museum of Modern Art in New York. ♦ **"The Price Collection: Jakuchu and the Age of Imagination"** will present Edo-period paintings from the collection of Joe and Etsuko Price. July 4 through Aug. 27.

AUSTRALIA: SYDNEY

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

Sydney is better known for its iconic opera house, but it also has a vibrant contemporary-art museum, much of whose permanent collection comprises work by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists. ♦ **"Bangu Yilbara: Works from the MCA."** This exhibit showcases more than forty artists with indigenous roots, including Melba Gunjarrwanga, Eddie Puruntatameri, Tracey Moffatt, and David Malangi Daymirringu. (The show's title means "to make now," in the language of the Gadigal people, the traditional owners of the land on which the museum sits.) Through Oct. 1. ♦ **"The 15th Biennale of Sydney."** Australia's largest art

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
GOING DANISH

The world's most all-around pleasant modern museum, the Louisiana, rambles through several structures—including the nineteenth-century house that its first owner named for his three wives, each one a Louise—on a seaside bluff about twenty miles north of Copenhagen, with a view of Sweden. The fine collection is strong in postwar Europeans (there are dozens of works by Giacometti, wonderfully installed), American Pop art, and international neo-expressionism. A peculiarly northern-European quality, quietly ardent, reflects the spirit of Knud W. Jensen, who founded the Louisiana in 1958. The visionary patron had a special concern for children, who, he once said, "are usually bored in museums, even if they are too polite to say so." He wanted them to feel that "they were paying a call on a stodgy, comfortable, slightly eccentric old uncle." Hands-on activities for kids are on constant offer. For everyone else, the museum has stayed scrupulously au courant. This summer's exhibition mounts theatrical videos by Pipilotti Rist, Sam Taylor-Wood, Bill Viola, and several other adepts of the lately blooming medium.

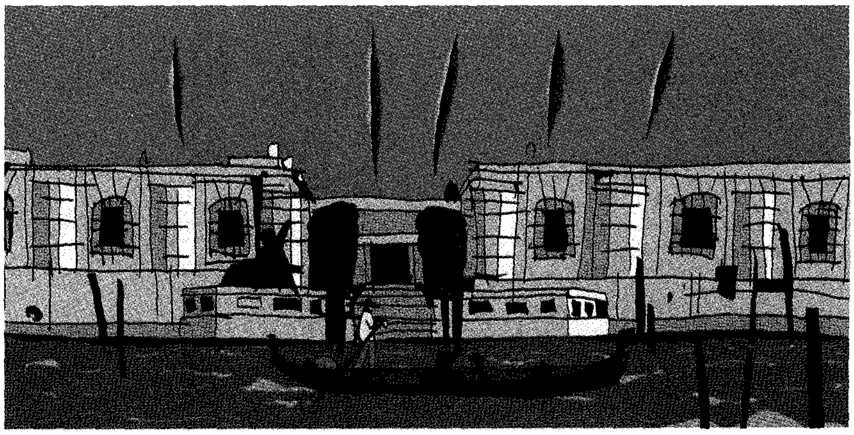
—*Peter Schjeldahl*

VENICE

PEGGY GUGGENHEIM COLLECTION
This is the most intimate and personable museum in the Guggenheim fleet, housed in the Grand Canal palazzo that was Peggy Guggenheim's home for thirty years. Paintings and sculptures form the core of the collection, including works by Giacometti, Duchamp, Klee, Pollock, and Max Ernst, to whom she was married for a time. She delighted in provocation; the rider of Marino Marini's "The Angel of the City," a bronze equestrian statue that still stands in the courtyard, sports an unignorable erection. ♦ **"Lucio Fontana: Venice/New York."** An examination of works from the later career of the painter and sculptor (1899-1968) known for his slashed canvases and his advocacy of an aesthetic philosophy that he called Spatialism. Through Sept. 24.

NORTH AMERICA: LOS ANGELES

GETTY CENTER
Richard Meier's complex, completed in 1997, is rich in views (it's built on a hilltop overlooking the Pacific Ocean, the Santa Monica Mountains, and greater Los Angeles), rich materially (the buildings are clad in an almost golden Italian travertine veined with fossilized plants and feathers), and rich in its collections. ♦ **"Ensor's Graphic Modernism."** "The Entry of Christ Into Brussels in 1889," in the Getty's permanent collection, is one of the most important works of the Belgian painter James Ensor (1860-1949). (In it, Ensor himself played the role of Jesus.) For this show, it is surrounded by thirty-three of his prints. Through July 30. ♦ **"Eliot Porter: In the Realm of Nature."** Iconic photographs of landscapes and birds. June 13 through Sept. 17. ♦ **"Rubens and Brueghel: A Working Friendship"** and **"Rubens and His Printmakers."** The first show will address collaboration between the two artists, such as "The Return from War: Mars Disarmed by Venus" (1610-12). Both run July 5 through Sept. 24.



The Peggy Guggenheim Collection, in Venice, is showing work by Lucio Fontana.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART
Renzo Piano, the go-to guy for museums seeking a face-lift or an expansion, has been hired to unite and make sense of LACMA's lacklustre six-building campus; the first phase of the three-part project is expected to be completed in 2007. ♦ **"Gustav Klimt: Five Paintings from the Collection of Ferdinand and Adele Bloch-Bauer."** After years of resistance and many court battles, Austria recently returned these paintings to Maria Altmann, whose family owned them prior to the rise of the Nazis. Through June 30. ♦ **"Consider This . . . ."** An exhibition of thought-provoking works by six artists, including Mark Bradford and Bruce Yonemoto, in an installation designed by Barbara Kruger. Through Jan. 15. ♦ Some hundred and sixty works are included in **"David Hockney Portraits,"** which travels to L.A. from the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. June 11 through Sept. 4. ♦ **"Richard Pousette-Dart: Works on Paper."** Fifty drawings dating from the nineteen-forties through the nineteen-eighties. June 29 through Sept. 17.

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART
Nancy Rubins's lumbering yet delicate construction of recycled airplane parts defies gravity in the courtyard of Arata Isozaki's 1986 building. The museum has two satellite branches, the Pacific Design Center and the Geffen Contemporary, the latter in a former police-car garage retrofitted by Frank Gehry. ♦ **"Lorna Simpson."** A twenty-year retrospective of the artist known for her gravely beautiful photographs and videos contemplating race and gender. Through July 10. ♦ **"Robert Rauschenberg: Combines."** A comprehensive survey recently on view in New York, at the Metropolitan. Through Sept. 4.

SAN FRANCISCO

DE YOUNG MUSEUM
Herzog & de Meuron's shiny new building still gleams, and the museum has settled into a regular schedule of exhibitions and performances. ♦ **"The Quilts of Gee's Bend"** features more than sixty quilts made by four generations of African-American women from a small Alabama town. July 15 through Nov. 26. ♦ **"From the Ground Up: American Artists of the Etching Revival"** documents the late-nineteenth-century interest in a medium that had fallen into neglect, with examples by artists such as Whistler, Cassatt, and Pennell. Through Sept. 3. ♦ **"Personal Perspectives: Aspects of European Photography."** Images by Talbot, Daguerre, Degas, Brassaï, and others. Through Sept. 17.

SAN FRANCISCO MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
The museum set up shop in a new building designed by the Swiss architect Mario Botta, in collaboration with Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum, in 1995, installing a permanent collection that includes works by Eva Hesse, Gerhard Richter, Cindy Sherman, and Constantin Brancusi. ♦ **"Matthew Barney: Drawing Restraint."** A survey of the art star's almost twenty-year project; the latest installment, "Drawing Restraint 9," was recently on view at New York's MOMA. June 23 through Sept. 17. ♦ Three young painters with shared interests in realism and memory are presented in **"New Work: Tim Gardner, Marcelino Gonçalves, Zak Smith."** Through Sept. 5. ♦ **"Shomei Tomatsu: Skin of a Nation"** is a retrospective of one of Japan's most important photographers. Through Aug. 13.

LEFT: LAURIE ROSENWALD; RIGHT: JEROEN KOOLHAAS

event is curated this year by Charles Merewether, an art historian who is also assembling an exhibit of postwar Japanese art for the Getty Center. The Biennale includes eighty-five artists from forty-four countries, and occupies sixteen venues. Through Aug. 27.

EUROPE: BILBAO

GUGGENHEIM BILBAO

In the years since Frank Gehry's swirling, sweeping, titanium-clad building opened, in 1997, this once fading industrial city has turned into an international art destination. ♦ **"Russia!,"** the monumental survey that spent the winter at the Guggenheim in New York, migrates to Spain for the summer. Its exuberant rubric is not as limiting as one might think; included here are gilt religious icons dating from the Middle Ages, Renaissance-era Western European paintings from imperial collections, romanticized portraits of peasant life, socialist-realist paintings, early modernist masterworks from the collections of industrialists, and videos made just last year. Through Sept. 3. ♦ **"Max Beckmann: Watercolors and Pastels."** Beckmann (1884-1950) is best known for his epic treatments of themes like war, politics, and oppression, but his works in these lighter media have a delicacy and a charm that captivate. June 27 through Sept. 17.

FLORENCE

UFFIZI GALLERY

One-stop shopping for Renaissance art, with masterworks by Giotto, Piero della Francesca, Botticelli, Raphael, Michelangelo, Caravaggio, and others. (The museum is also strong in its German, Dutch, and Flemish holdings.) The original collection was assembled by Grand Duke Francesco I and supplemented by various members of the Medici family; the museum takes up the top floor of the building that Giorgio Vasari designed in the late sixteenth century for the administrative offices of the Tuscan state. ♦ **"The Mind of Leonardo da Vinci: The Universal Genius at Work."** Most exhibitions on Leonardo have concentrated on his sprawling curiosity and the intimidating richness of his thinking. This one attempts to demystify the artist and calmly address his contributions to art, science, architecture, and technology. The show includes original drawings and paintings (on exhibit only through June), as well as working models of his machines and re-creations of his experiments. Through January, 2007.

LONDON

TATE BRITAIN

The seeds of the museum lie in the collection of Sir Henry Tate, a nineteenth-century London sugar baron, who turned his considerable wealth to art collecting and, with an eighty-thousand-pound gift in 1889, the construction of a national museum to hold it. ♦ **"Constable: The Great Landscapes"** includes nine six-foot canvases that the British artist painted starting in 1818. Through Aug. 28. ♦ **"Howard Hodgkin,"** a full-scale retrospective of the master colorist, who extends his smeary, saturated abstractions onto frames and borders. June 14 through Sept. 10.

TATE MODERN

It opened in 2000, but the Tate Modern is already one of the world's best modern-art museums. Carved out of a former power station by the Swiss architectural team of Herzog & de Meuron, it houses the Tate's twentieth- and twenty-first-century works. ♦ **"Kandinsky: The Path to Abstraction, 1908-1922"** focusses on the first half of the Russian-born painter's career. June 22 through Oct. 1. ♦ **"Brian Jungen."** The young Canadian artist, who reconfigures everyday objects—Nike sneakers, lawn chairs, cafeteria trays, and the like—into works that address political themes, presents a project inspired in part by the activities of Greenpeace. Through July 16. ♦ **"Pierre Huyghe: Celebration Park."** A solo exhibition of the French video artist, whose Antarctica-themed "A Journey That Wasn't" was a hit at this year's Whitney Biennial. July 5 through Sept. 17.

VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM

Initially called the South Kensington Museum and devoted to both art and science, the Victoria and Albert was renamed in 1899 and became entirely devoted to the decorative arts in 1913. The V. & A.'s extensive permanent collection includes European objects and art works, as well as pieces from India, China, Japan, Korea, and the Islamic world. ♦ **"Modernism: Designing a New World 1914-1939."** A lavish survey of objects created from the start of the First World War to the eve of the Second, this exhibition includes everything from advances in mass-produced clothing to the Marcel Breuer club chair to the Tatra T-87, the Czechoslovakian car that was Europe's first streamlined production automobile. Through July 23. ♦ **"Che Guevara: Revolutionary and Icon."** This exhibition looks at Che as an enduring symbol of the counterculture, through art works, posters, and photography featuring his image—including the famous photograph taken in 1960 by Alberto Diaz Korda—from more than thirty countries. Through Aug. 26.

MADRID

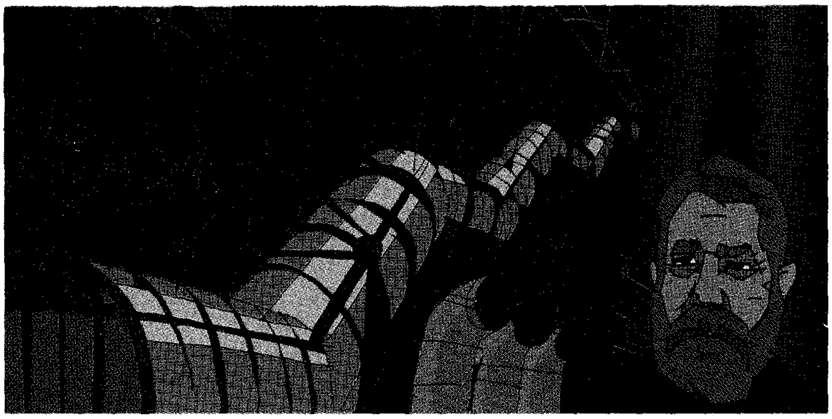
MUSEO NACIONAL DEL PRADO

Maria Isabel de Bragança, the wife of Ferdinand VII, is credited as being the founder of Spain's greatest museum, which opened in 1819 and is noted for its stellar arrays of El Grecos, Velázquezes, and Goyas. ♦ The Prado is the flagship venue of **"Picasso: Tradition and Avant-Garde,"** which continues nearby at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía. Timed to coincide with both Picasso's hundred-and-twenty-fifth birthday and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the return of "Guernica" to Spain, the exhibit pairs Picasso's greatest works with thematically or formally related masterpieces of Spanish art. Through Sept. 3.

PARIS

CENTRE GEORGES POMPIDOU

Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano's sometimes loved, sometimes loathed building contains great collections of Fauvist, Cubist, and Ab Ex art, as well as some special summer exhibitions. ♦ **"David Smith,"** the centennial show recently on view at the Guggenheim in New York, is here from June 14 through Aug. 21. ♦ **Claude Closky,** the 2005 recipient of the Marcel Duchamp Prize, given annually to a promising young artist, is the subject of an exhibition that runs through July 31. ♦ **"Los Angeles 1955-1985: The Birth of an Art Capital."** The usual suspects, transposed to Paris: John Baldessari, Chris Burden, Vija Celmins, Bruce Nauman, and, of course, Ed Ruscha, among others. Through July 17. ♦ **"Voyages en Utopie: Jean-Luc Godard 1946-2006"** is a documentary exhibition corresponding with a summer-long retrospective of Godard's films. Through Aug. 14. ♦ James Turrell's 1967 projection work **"Alta White"** was recently acquired by the Pompidou, and is on view in the museum's Atelier Brancusi gallery. Through Sept. 25.



James Turrell's "Alta White" (1967) is at the Centre Georges Pompidou.

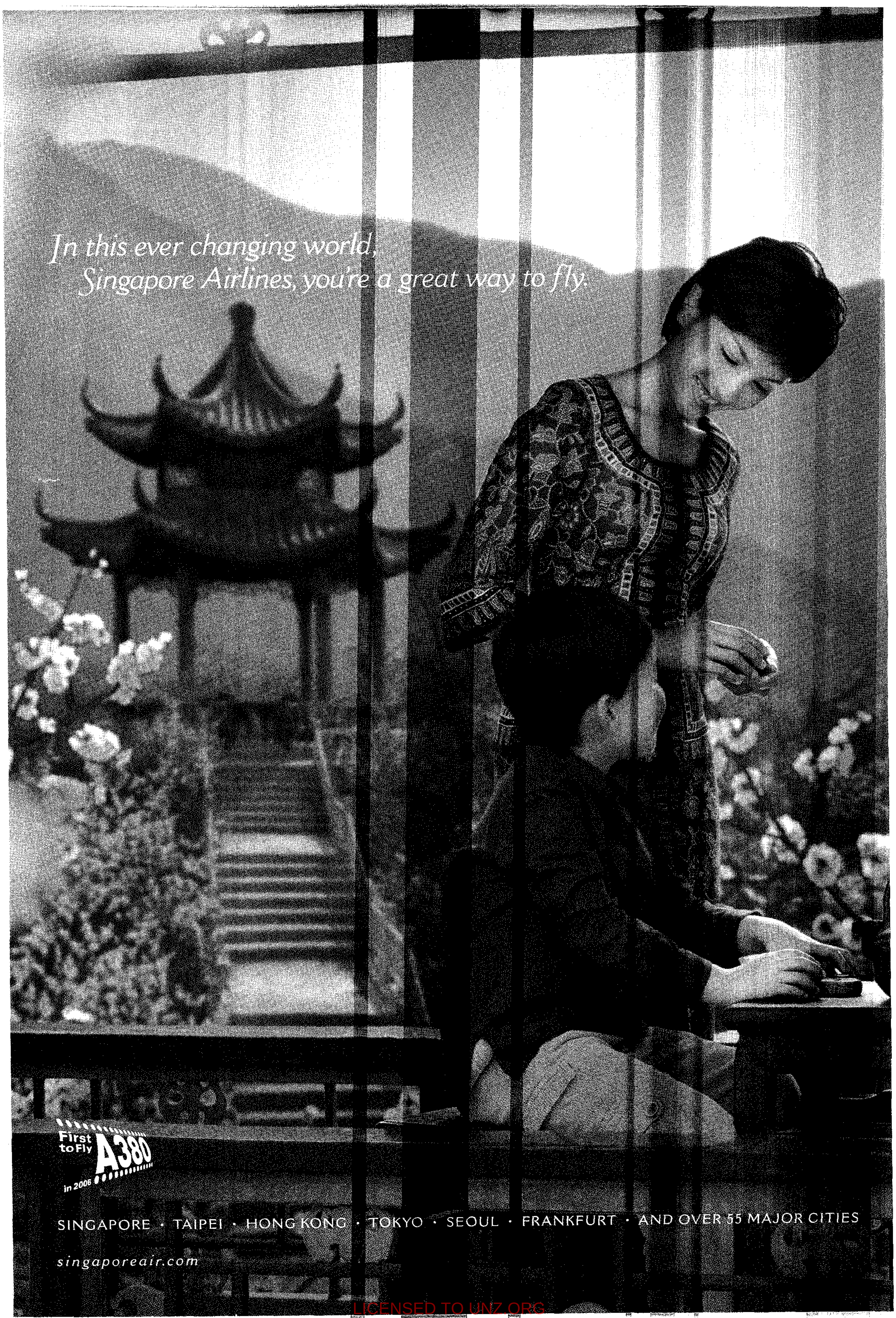
JEROEN KOOLHAAS

MUSÉE DU LOUVRE

If a fresh strain of "Da Vinci Code" fever starts going around in the wake of the movie, attendance at the Louvre, where some of it was filmed, may swell. In addition to I. M. Pei's pyramids and the recently rehung "Mona Lisa," visitors will be rewarded with an enticing slate of summer exhibitions. ♦ **"Treasury of the World: Jeweled Arts of India in the Age of the Mughals,"** on loan from the Kuwait National Museum, runs July 6 through Sept. 4. ♦ **"American Artists and the Louvre"** examines transatlantic exchange, using some thirty works dating from the eighteenth to the twentieth century, by artists such as Samuel F. B. Morse, Benjamin West, George Catlin, Robert Henri, and Edward Hopper. June 14 through Sept. 18. ♦ Mike Kelley's video installation **"Profondeurs Vertes,"** made for the Louvre to coincide with the "American Artists" show, is based on John Singleton Copley's "Watson and the Shark" and Thomas Wilmer Dewing's "The Recitation." June 14 through Sept. 18.

MUSÉE D'ORSAY

The airy museum, fashioned from an old train station, is the repository of such treasures as Manet's "Olympia" and "Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe," Cabanel's "The Birth of Venus," Caillebotte's "The Floor Planers," and Seurat's "The Circus." ♦ **"Drawings by Jean-François Millet"** broadens the perspective from a museum that owns most of Millet's best paintings. Through Sept. 3. ♦ The **"Correspondences"** series invites contemporary artists to pair works of their own with works from the collection. This time, Robert Mangold chooses a Gauguin painting and Annette Messager chooses a model of the area around the Opéra. Through Sept. 3. ♦ **"Photographing Art: The Birth of a Genre"** describes the earliest days of photography, and how the medium was first used to record and reproduce paintings, sculptures, and architecture. June 27 through Sept. 24. ♦ **"Auguste Rodin/Eugène Carrière"** exhibits the work of two artists whose reputations have had divergent trajectories since their deaths. July 11 through Oct. 1.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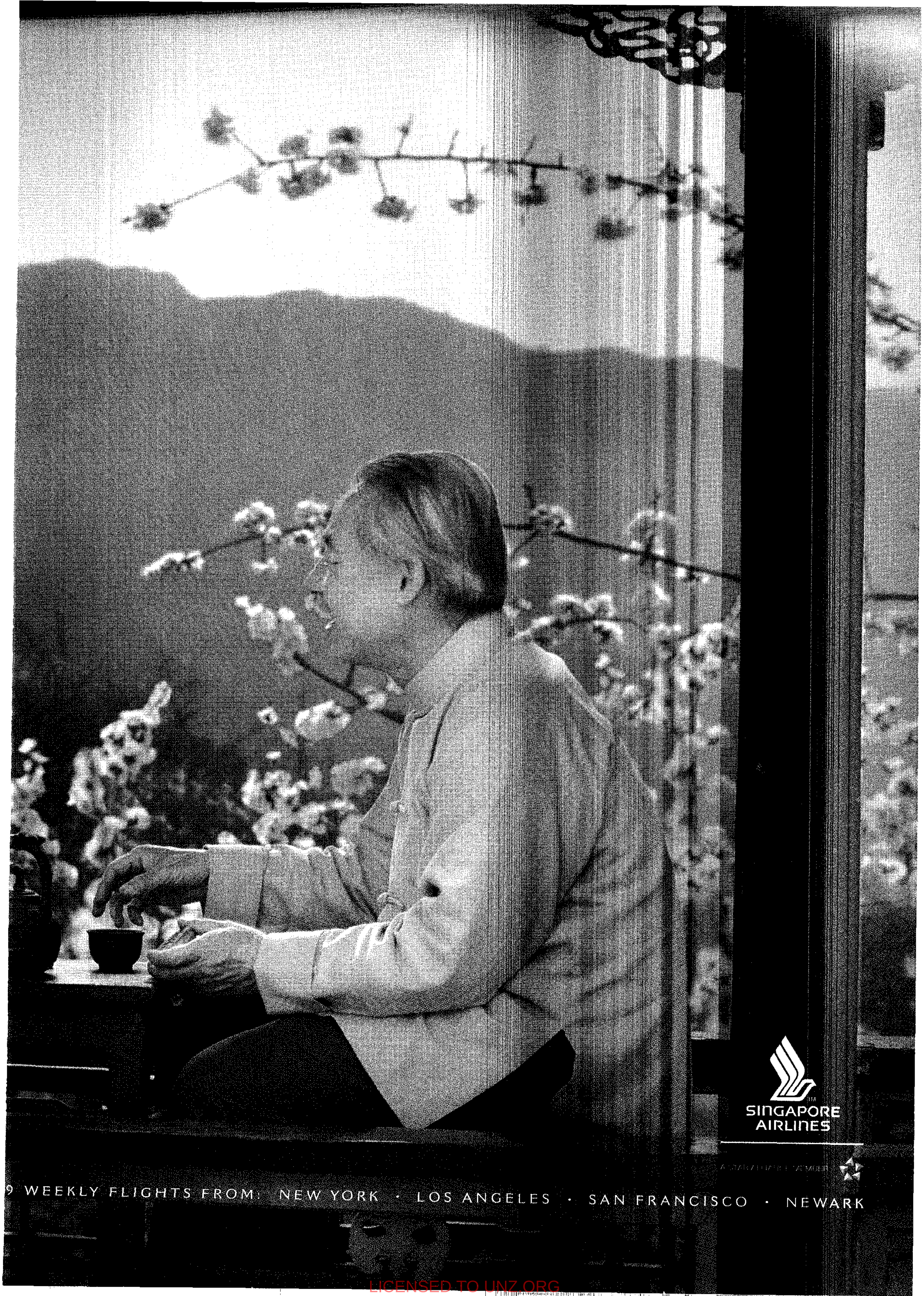
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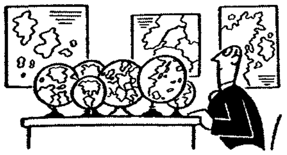
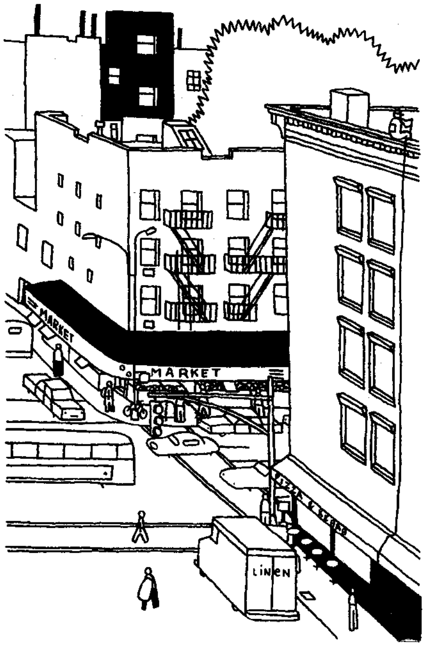


In a reflective moment shortly before Memorial Day, President Bush told reporters that he had come to regret the "tough talk" he used when taking the country to war. He rued tagging Osama bin Laden with the phrase "wanted dead or alive" and taunting Iraqi insurgents to "bring it on." The fight has not gone so simply, and, he said, "I learned some lessons about expressing myself maybe in a little more sophisticated manner." The President's wartime woes are hardly limited to his rhetoric, but as long as he is calling his own bluff it's worth remembering another line of foreign-policy swagger. Shortly after Bush took office, an adviser gave him a report on the Clinton Administration's policy of inaction during the Rwandan genocide, and on it the President wrote, "Not on my watch!" Those words have now been taken up as the rallying cry of America's anti-genocide movement—a loose, bipartisan coalition of students, human-rights professionals, church groups, editorial writers, professors, movie stars, and a few elected officials—which advocates immediate military action to stop the killing in the Darfur region of Sudan.

There is something absurdist about the existence of an anti-genocide movement. For any other anti-something campaign (anti-war, anti-tax, anti-porn), there is an opposing force (the hawks, the tax-hikers, the pornographers), while nobody, of course, is stumping for genocide. To declare oneself against it is a safe bet, even in a case as complicated as that of Darfur, a civil-war-ravaged patch of the Sahara, where many political factors and military factions have contributed to the anguish. Yet it has never been the American way to venture abroad to stop mass slaughter by force. We entered the Second World War nearly three years into the fight, and then not to save Europe's Jews but in response to a direct attack on our territory and, ultimately, to repel Fascist aggression. We did not save Cambodia from itself, and did nothing while eight hundred thousand Rwandans were killed. And, when Europe was again disfigured by concentration camps and ethnic cleansing, in the Balkans, we waited for years before pacifying Bosnia and, later, Kosovo with aerial bombardments. (Even then, the logic was as much strategic—to bring a defiant dictator to heel and restore order on NATO's turf—as it was humanitarian.) We have not sent forces into Congo, although it has been riddled with massacres in the past decade, nor did we send troops to southern Sudan during the civil war there that claimed more than a million lives in the past two decades.



So it is not surprising that we have stayed out of Darfur. That, truly, is Rwanda's lesson: endangered peoples who depend on us for their salvation stand undefended. President Clinton has said that he regrets not protecting Rwanda, but during the 2000 Presidential campaign Bush identified the decision as one of the few Clinton policies he approved of. "I think the Administration did the right thing in that case," he said. "It was a horrible situation, no one liked to see it on our TV screens, but . . . I thought they made the right decision not to send U.S. troops." After the election, Bush apparently changed his attitude, and, after the inva-

LAURENT CILLUFFO

sion of Iraq—once it became clear that no weapons of mass destruction were to be found—he took to explaining the war as just the sort of humanitarian, nation-building mission that he had campaigned against. But, despite the universalist rhetoric, when both sides in Liberia's decades-old civil war pleaded, in the summer of 2003, for American intervention, the President refused their appeal.

The killing in Darfur began that year. No precise casualty figures exist, but the janjaweed militias sponsored by the Sudanese government are reported to have killed hundreds of thousands of people, raped a great many of the women they left alive, and driven some two million from their homes to live—and to be hunted—in desert refugee camps, where potable water is scarce and disease widespread. Despite the Sudanese government's acceptance of a cease-fire agreement last month, the violence has continued apace. The only outside force that has been allowed into the conflict zone is a monitoring mission from the African Union, composed of seven thousand relatively poorly equipped soldiers, who are under orders only to observe the terror and not take any action to stop it. Now there are plans to deploy as many as twenty thousand United Nations peacekeeping troops to Darfur at the end of this year. It is not clear that the Sudanese will permit such a force or that the U.N. can muster it—but, assuming that it happens, this is a decidedly lax timetable in the face of a steadily mounting death toll.

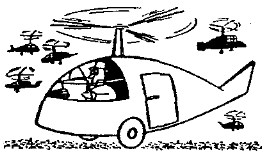
Given the Bush Administration's contempt for the U.N., and the U.N.'s own dysfunction, it is a measure of how low Darfur's situation ranks among the Administration's priorities that it is willing to let the Security Council handle it. And it is a measure of how forsaken Darfur is that Bush has been more actively engaged with its crisis than many Western leaders. (Last month, when the World Food Program, finding itself strapped for funds, cut food rations for Darfuri refugees, Bush noted that the United States, unlike other nations, had met its financial commitment.) Still, one can't help thinking that the words "Not on my watch" originally carried a bigger promise.

The interventionist impulse—whether it is espoused by liberal humanitarians or neocon hawks—is not much in favor these days. Anti-genocide activists argue that Darfuris should not be made to pay for mistakes made in Iraq, and that "saving Darfur" can redeem America's international honor. But how do we know that, if we take action, we will do the right thing and do it successfully? "Tough talk" aside, Darfur presents no more of a cakewalk than Iraq did. A major ground invasion would be required to stop the janjaweed's horse- and camel-mounted killers—and advocates of intervention insist that air power would be needed as well. There are dozens of ethnic groups in Darfur, and at least three fractious rebel movements, in addition to the janjaweed, the Army, and the Air Force, and it is not clear which of them would be on our side, or whose side we would want to be on. To further complicate matters, the Bush Administration has cultivated the Sudanese regime (once host to bin Laden and Al Qaeda) as one of its unlikely new allies in the war on terror, and Washington has long supported the dictatorship in neighboring Chad, which is in a state of increasingly open conflict with Sudan.

At such times in the past, we turned to the community of nations, and although that proved, for the most part, a disappointing instrument, it is even more unsettling to find ourselves led by an Administration whose incompetent unilateralism has weakened America's influence around the world. As the catastrophe in Darfur confronts us with the limitations of our power, the idea of a common international humanity appears as remote as ever.

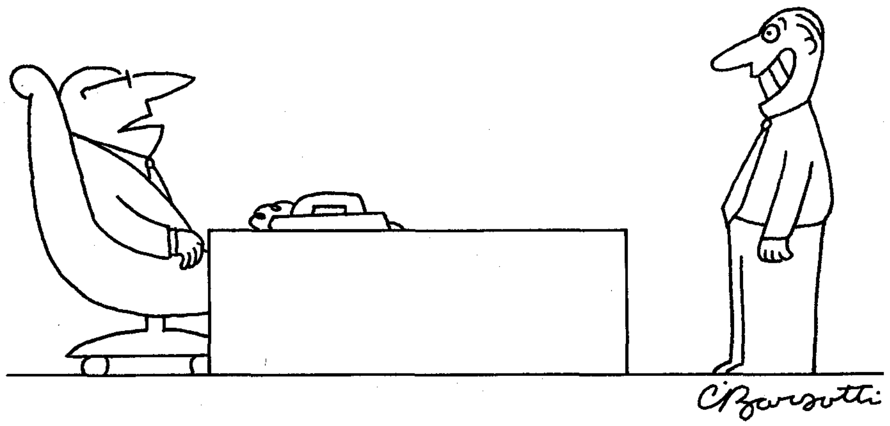
—*Philip Gourevitch*

LIFE DURING WARTIME VIETNAM, 1966



In early 1966, I was catching a ride on a helicopter out to a battle on the central coast of South Vietnam. Once there, I intended to hook up with an infantry battalion of the 1st Cavalry Division that was going into action. Both of the pilots were lieutenant colonels, helicopter battalion commanders in the same 1st Cav. I was sitting on the bench seat behind them, with two enlisted machine gunners on either side of me. The colonels were amusing themselves by slapping the tops of the palm trees that covered the area with the skids of the helicopter. It was dangerous play. The slightest miscalculation could send the helicopter spinning into the ground under full power and we would all die. Jesus Christ, I thought. All I want is a helicopter ride and I draw two lieutenant colonels behaving like a pair of fucking cowboys.

I remembered some advice that the great war correspondent Homer Bigart had once given me. Homer had covered every war from the Second World War to the Greek civil war, the Korean War, and sundry other conflicts, earning two Pulitzer Prizes along the way. He was in his mid-fifties by the time of Vietnam and, although fiercely competitive, he took pity on a kid reporter and let me follow him around like a puppy dog. One



"Well, I'm sorry, Wendell, I just assumed you knew you were a frill."

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DRINK WITH STYLE. DRINK RESPONSIBLY. ©2006 Marnier-Lapostolle Inc., NY, NY. GRAND MARNIER® Liqueur 40% Alc./Vol. (80°) *Void in CA day in 1962, I asked him how he'd managed to stay alive through so many wars. "Take what risks you need to get the story, but don't take any foolish ones," he said. "Never play tourist."

Back in November, I had nearly been killed playing reluctant tourist with a senior officer of the 1st Cavalry, a colonel who was the division engineer. It was the end of the third day of the battle of Ia Drang, the first ferocious clash between the American and the North Vietnamese Armies in the mountains of South Vietnam. I needed to get to brigade headquarters to finish up my reporting before returning to the main air base, at Pleiku, to file my story. The colonel was headed there, and I asked if I could hitch a ride on his helicopter. On the way, he decided to have a look at the effects of a B-52 strike on a suspected concentration of North Vietnamese troops. He had his pilots hover at several thousand feet while he looked at the scene below, where hundreds of bombs had splintered the massive teak and mahogany trees of the rain forest into kindling. A division engineer had no professional need to inspect a B-52 strike, and the colonel and his helicopter pilots failed to notice that the Air Force was following up with strikes by individual jet fighter-bombers, apparently trying to finish off any North Vietnamese who might still be alive.

All of a sudden, the silvered fuselage of a tactical jet flashed down in a dive beneath us. The pilot released a bomb, then pulled the jet straight up at several hundred miles an hour. The helicopter pilots shifted frantically to one side to try to get out of the way. At the last moment, the pilot of the jet saw us hanging in the air above him and swerved. He was so close as he passed that I could see his face. Playing tourist, I immediately thought, hearing Homer's words.

Now, what to do about these cowboy lieutenant colonels playing tourist with their helicopter. A reporter does not give instructions to officers of the United States Army, let alone reprimand them for flying like maniacs. He keeps his mouth shut. He is their guest. I picked up the headphones that would put me into the helicopter's intercom system.

"Why are you slapping the palm trees?" I asked.

"Just having fun," one of them replied.

"How long have you gentlemen been in the country?"

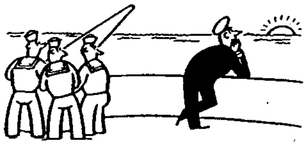
"About a month."

"Well," I said. "I'm in my third year in Vietnam. I've got a twenty-seven-year-old bride back in Saigon, and I'd like to live to sleep with her again. How about leaving the palm trees alone?"

There was no response. When the next palm tree loomed, they pulled away.

—*Neil Sheehan*

LIFE DURING WARTIME
ANTARCTICA, 1958



In 1958, I was a duty helmsman on the bridge of the U.S.S. Arneb, an ungainly naval transport ship with the lines of a tramp steamer. The Arneb had entertained kamikazes at Okinawa, and veterans of Normandy and the South Pacific ran many of the ship's divisions. But that quarter—spring in the northern calendar, darkening autumn in the southern ocean—we had been given a kind of pass from the alerts of the Cold War. We were, among other things, tracking electrical activity on the surface of the sun, from the far south of the Indian Ocean. On board was a team of astrophysicists, biologists, and other savants. It was the last of the Antarctic expeditions mapped out by Admiral Richard Byrd, and it was known as Operation Deep Freeze III.

One day, we were steaming on the northern edge of the ice floes at the latitude where the seasonal oscillations of the Antarctic Convergence determine the weather. I was standing the 2400-0400 watch at the helm. I liked having the wheel far out at sea. I was twenty years old. I had gone into the Navy at seventeen, skipping my last year of high school, and I was due for discharge that July. The wheel watch allowed for some daydreaming, and I was speculating on the prospect of actual adult life when the port lookout reported what he thought was another vessel. For the next fifteen minutes, we watched a long blue-black line stretch out at a slight angle of interception to our course. It seemed to extend without limit, as far as the after-horizon, where the sun was threatening to disappear.

Presently, the captain appeared on the bridge, and I handed over the wheel to the quartermaster of the watch. "Unidentified vessel," the quartermaster declared, "proceeding west on bearing two niner zero." Our skipper was a gloomy man, a disappointed career officer lacking any sense of what European social critics call "deep play." But apparently the great beast on the horizon intrigued him, too. He ordered the ship to port. Splendid in his bridge coat, he raised his binoculars and studied the vessel, which was keeping speed with us at a mile's distance. It was low in the water and was certainly proceeding west. But whatever engine powered it was mysterious to me; it seemed to throb, a distinctly unstable mass. At this distance, we could see that there were flights of predatory birds attending it, mainly the terrible buzzard gulls called skuas.

Watching the captain, on whose decisions we all depended, I suddenly suspected that he was going to give the order to fire. Not that we had much to fire with: a five-inch deck gun and a couple of anti-aircraft guns. And not that the captain was some kind of trigger-happy savage compelled to shoot at anything that could float. Still, the destroyer sailor's impulse was, at least, to line up unidentified craft as targets.

I shared a pair of binoculars with the bridge messenger and watched the mass in front of us change shape and direction as we adjusted our course to make way for it. The longer I looked at the thing, the more awesome it seemed. In my mind, anyway, it assumed a sort of monstrousness, as if it were a living thing, huge and unrecognizable.

"Penguins," someone said. One of our learned scientists, perhaps, who had wandered up from his stateroom. And penguins they were, Adélie penguins, the little hooded characters who waddle clownishly around their breeding colonies. For an hour, the men on the bridge of the U.S.S. Arneb watched the enormous colony of birds swim, porpoising, in long, graceful curves. Later that morning, as the sun cleared the tips of the nearest icebergs, the winds picked up, and by 0600 they were near the top of the revised Beaufort scale, Force 10 or higher. The penguins stayed with us, sharing passages between the floes. When I went below to crash, taking to my rack, which was

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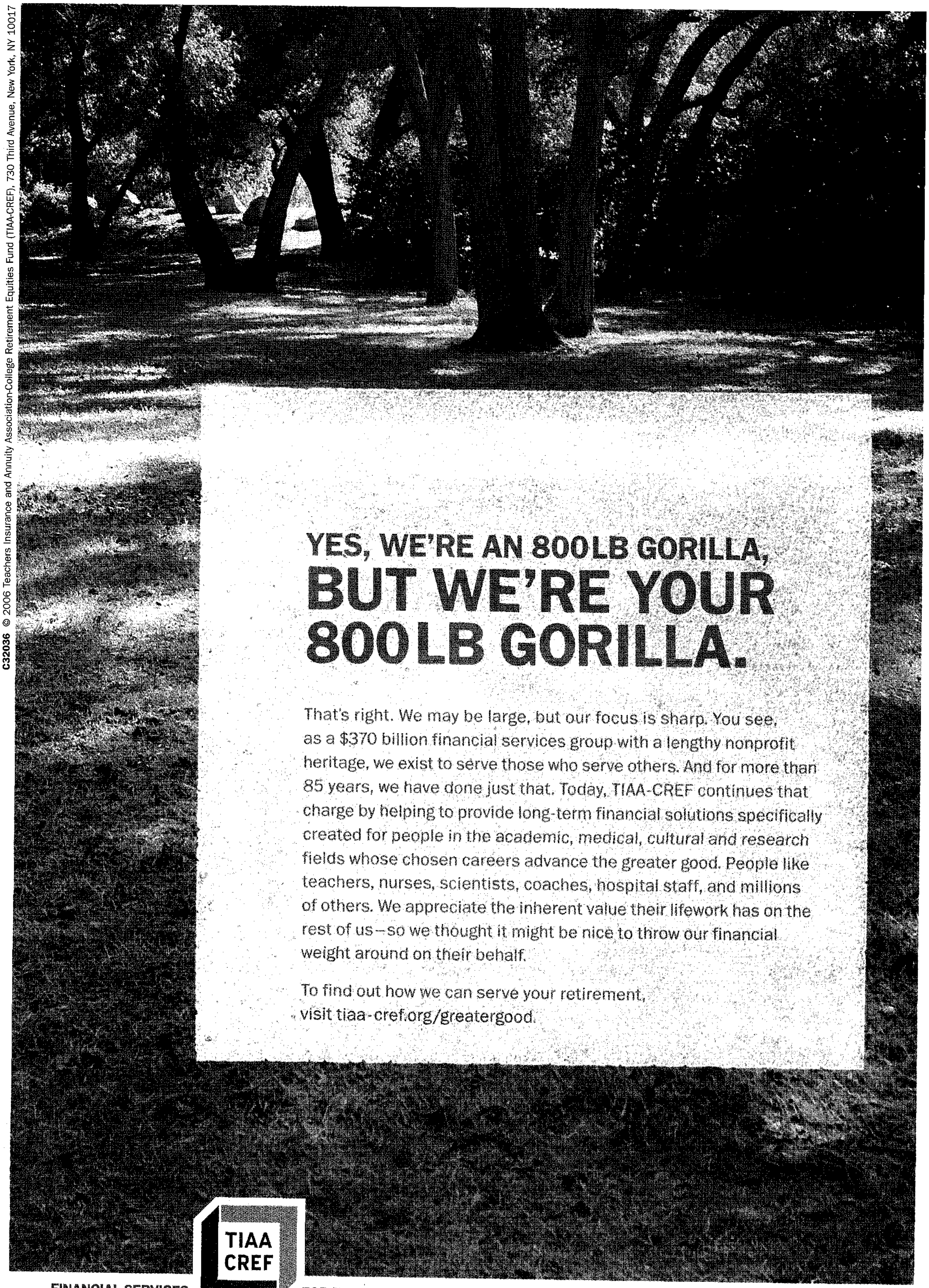

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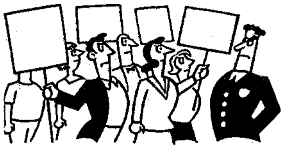
at the top of a four-high tier, I lay down to read with my pocket flashlight. I had "Ulysses" checked out of the Norfolk, Virginia, public library, and plenty of time to be patient with it. When we started sliding to port, I'd stay with Leopold Bloom for as long as I could tough it out, waiting for the big lumbering ship to arrest its roll and come back to starboard. At times, in rough weather, it seemed as if we'd never make it back, as if we were about to slide down the whole deep six. Then I'd set my book aside and ponder my fortune. An old master-at-arms I once knew had advice for sinking sailors: "Be grateful you're not burning." A little gratitude would ease one's passage, the old man thought. But the U.S.S. Arneb came back every time, popping up to ride the next forward motion. It occurred to me at one of those moments that I was happier than I had ever been before—with the penguins, the icebergs, the Beaufort scale, and the celestial nimbus clouds cruising above the wind. Happier, I suspected, than I would ever be again.

—*Robert Stone*

LIFE DURING WARTIME
NEW YORK, 1967



By October of 1965, I could watch the opposition to the war in Vietnam forming up outside my bedroom window. Nearly a thousand American troops had already died in the faraway fighting, which looked so close on our TV screens every night, and upward of a hundred and forty thousand—drafted inner-city blacks and down-home white country boys, by the look of them—were there, without notable result. A month later, my wife, Carol, and I joined friends and strangers aboard a bus that took us in a caravan to Washington, where we became part of twenty-five thousand antiwar demonstrators outside the White House and then over on the lawns sloping up toward the Capitol, where we cheered speeches by Bella Abzug and Benjamin Spock and others, and even slipped away for a furtive cultural visit to the Smithsonian. We hated this blood-soaked war—for weeks at a stretch it seemed as if nothing else were on our minds—but the tone aboard the bus trip and during that long day's outing was upbeat, almost lighthearted. Our companions—my old college pal Spencer Klaw (he'd been the editor of the *Harvard Crimson*) and his wife, Bobbie, who was Carol's associate at *American Heritage*, and the Klaws' youngest daughter, Margy—were friends we sometimes joined in November for football games in New Haven and Cambridge, and this embarrassing sense of overlap and gala middle-class smugness about our protest was something we noticed and, in our ironic self-awareness, remarked on. War protesting was more fun than Ivy League football. When our bus stopped at one of the mall-like gas stations on the New Jersey Turnpike, it was a big laugh when the women aboard (who outnumbered us men by about three to one) liberated the men's rest room. If we sound naïve now, it would be easy to assume that the most pathetic thing about us was our notion that we might make a difference, and change things. Only we did.

Caring about Vietnam made you feel good, and it brought you closer to your kids, as well. My older daughter, Callie, was a student at Goucher College, outside Baltimore, just then, and she came along on another weekend, when we joined a crowd of picketers walking slowly around the White House and chanting, "Hey, hey, L.B.J., how many kids have you killed today?" We'd voted for Johnson, of course, and had been big fans of his, going back to his time as Senate Majority Leader, but all that was gone now. At some point that day, our slovenly bunch came close to a trail of sightseers, docilely lined up to visit the White House, and Callie suddenly found herself face to face with a long bygone schoolmate.

"Callie, what are you doing here?" the young woman cried.

"No, what are you doing there?" Callie said.

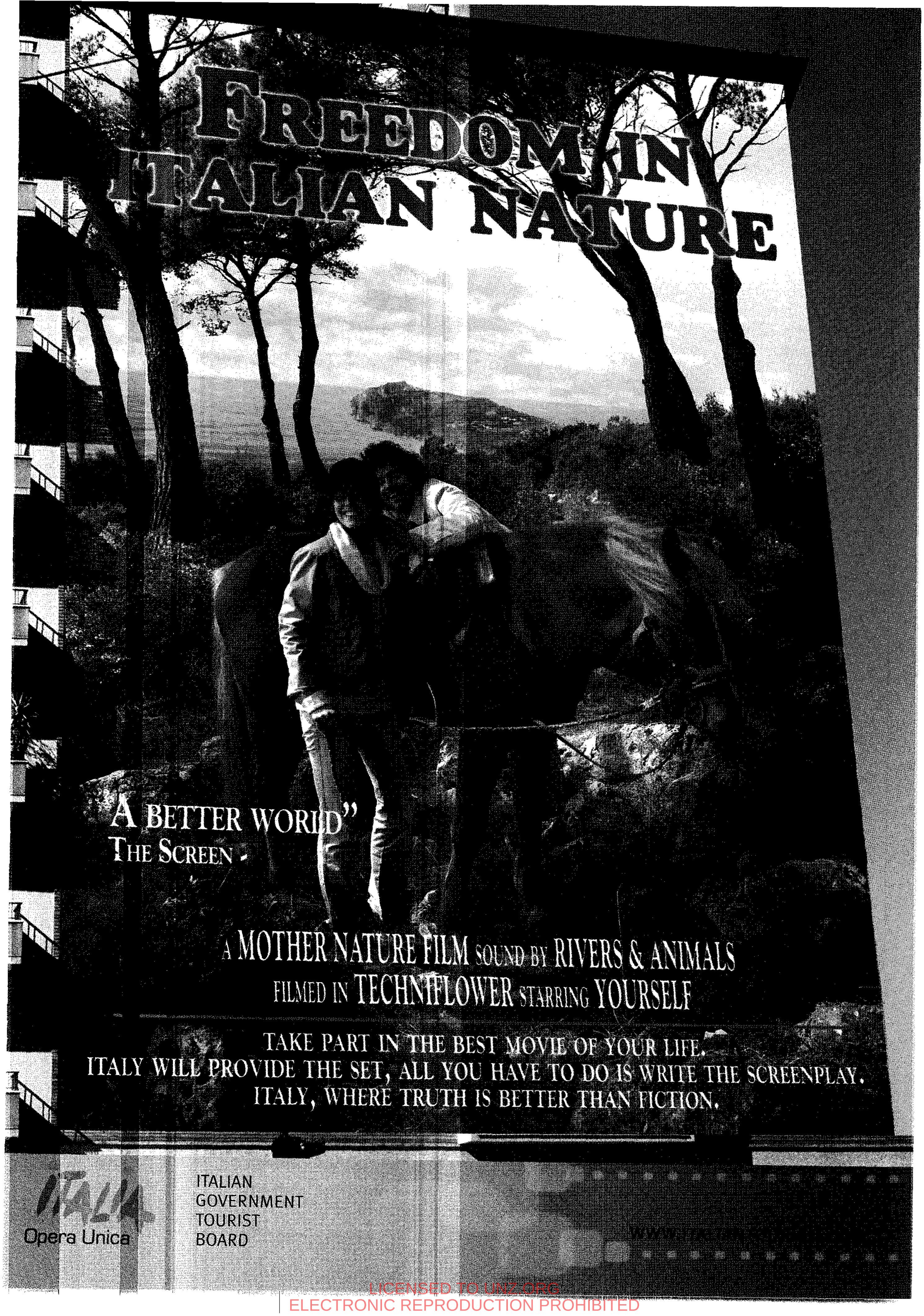
As was happening in many multigenerational families just then, I believe, Callie became our delegate at the spilling-over and increasingly bitter demonstrations. She was there in October of 1967, when the Yippies attempted to levitate the Pentagon, and she told us that night that she'd seen men in the first row of marchers placing flowers inside the barrels of the fixed-bayonet rifles presented by the front row of scared M.P.s. Another time, she joined a line of candle-bearing demonstrators walking slowly around the outskirts of Washington, each with the name of a dead G.I.—dead in Vietnam—hung around his or her neck.

Back to that window. Our apartment was a cheerful third-floor walkup in a brownstone between Fifth and Madison Avenues, on Ninety-fourth Street—a quiet block that unexpectedly became one of the forming-up side streets for marchers heading down Fifth. On the morning of the great ten-thousand-strong parade, Carol and I had a front-row perch looking down at the jammed-together, button- and ribbon-bearing citizenry below. Somewhere a band was playing "I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-to-Die Rag," the Country Joe and the Fish classic everybody knew by heart. The gigantic skulls and caricatures of the Bread and Puppet Theatre tottered and swayed at the top of the block, and we waited while the various group banners—S.D.S. and others—went slowly past, until our own bunch, Veterans for Peace (I was a veteran), came along and we went downstairs and out into the sunshine and marched away, too.

Two weeks later, there was a counter-demonstration, this one in support of the troops in Vietnam, and when I looked out our window the street was full of cops and firemen and union guys, all waving American flags. I found an old shirt cardboard and wrote "STOP THE BOMBING!" on it with a red felt-tip pen, and stuck it up on the window, and at first did not connect this mild message with some deeper new sounds that now came from outside and rose to a roar. A beer can banged off our windowpane in a sudden splatter, and when I looked outside I found a mass of angry, congested faces and brandished fists, all aimed at me. More beer cans were launched, some of them unopened, and some eggs as well. Our landlady, Mrs. Giurgiu, rang our bell and came in, waving her arms. "My God," she said. "What have you done? Whatever it is, stop."

I took down the sign but shot a finger at the triumphant crowd, to more shouts and curses. My face was a mirror of theirs by now: the American look. The war had come home.

—*Roger Angell*



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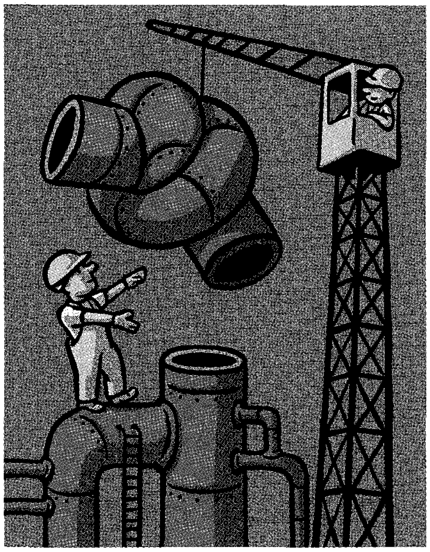
PUMPED UP

At first glance, there's nothing unusual about the refinery that Marathon Oil owns in Garyville, Louisiana. Like most refineries, it is in a small town near a port. It can refine two hundred and forty-five thousand barrels of oil a day, which is around the industry median. And the people who live near it have got used to the smell of sulfur dioxide. Indeed, the only thing that's special about the Garyville facility is that it was opened in 1976. That makes it the last refinery ever built in the United States.

Until recently, this didn't seem like a problem. Gasoline was cheap, and no one was clamoring to live next to a highly combustible chemical plant. So, over the past twenty-five years, the number of refineries in the U.S. has been cut in half, and although the remaining ones have expanded, they haven't kept up with the growing demand for gasoline. But now, with voters furious about three-dollar-a-gallon gas, Washington has decided that this trend must change. Samuel Bodman, the Energy Secretary, has exhorted oil companies to use some of their hefty profits to expand refining capacity, and Congress is considering streamlining the environmental regulations that add to the expense of building new refineries. The hope is that, with a little push and pull, refiners will embark on a building spree to ease the pressure at the pump.

Unfortunately, the lack of capacity that Washington sees as a crisis looks like an ideal business model to oil refiners. There are so few refineries in the U.S. now that they are run tight to the bone, typically using about ninety per cent of their total capacity. The result is that refining—which, until recently, was a tough, low-margin business—has become tremendously lucrative. Last year, refiners' profits jumped thirty-nine per cent, to twenty-four billion dollars, and this year should be even better. In California, gasoline prices have risen forty-eight per cent since the end of last year, even though crude-oil prices are up just seventeen per cent. Most of that difference has gone straight into refiners' pockets.

In a normal marketplace, of course, high prices and profits would drive companies to expand, in an attempt to capture more of the market, or else new players would emerge, hoping to outmaneuver a risk-averse establishment. But the refining industry isn't a normal marketplace. For one thing, refineries are huge investments—a new one costs at least two billion dollars—and they take a long time to open. This means that although refiners might make more money by opening new facilities and thus serving more customers, they'd rather take the sure money than gamble. It also means it's hard for new competitors to raise enough capital to enter the market at all.



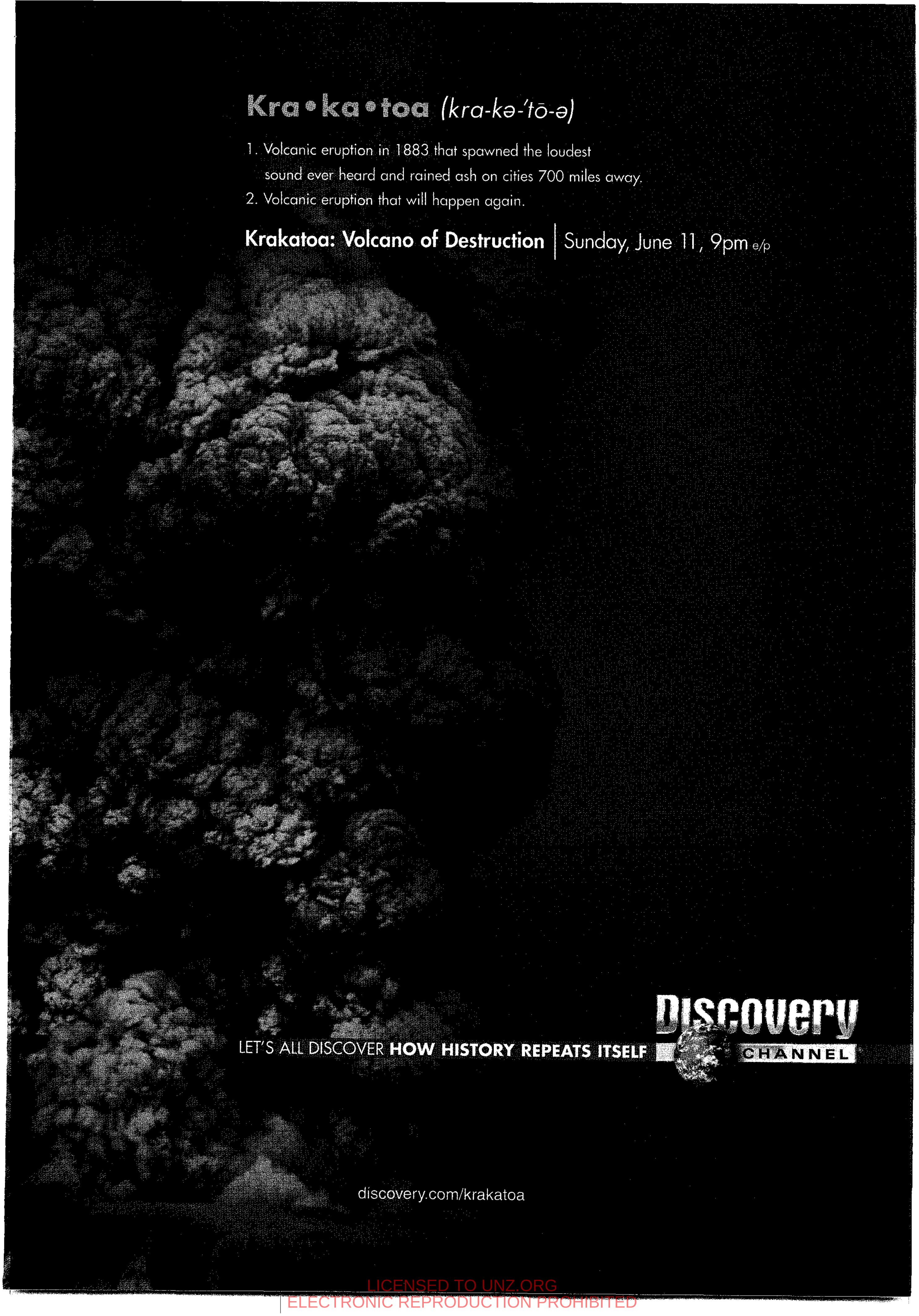
What's more, over the past fifteen years refiners have been buying each other up, creating an industry that's highly consolidated. In 1993, the five biggest refiners in the U.S. controlled thirty-five per cent of the market. By 2004, they controlled fifty-six per cent. And refining is primarily a regional business. The government allows different states to use different formulations of gasoline—some formulations burn cleaner than others—and in some urban areas a federal requirement determines what formula can be used, depending on the quality of their air. That makes it hard to ship gas across state lines, and shrinks the number of refiners that provide a particular blend of gas, giving each refiner more power. As a result, in many areas the refinery business is more like an oligopoly than like a competitive market. In 2002, a Senate report identified "tight oligopolies" operating in twenty-eight states; in California in 2003, ninety-five per cent of the refining market was in the hands of just seven companies.

Markets with few players selling a product as necessary as gasoline have unusual dynamics. In most businesses, there is no upside to having a plant or a store shut down: you lose sales, your stock goes bad, and your customers leave. In refining, though, you can sometimes make more money by selling less gas, or vice versa. Far from needing to add capacity, refiners can flourish even when they subtract it. When Hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit the Gulf Coast, for instance, Marathon Oil had to shut down two of its refineries, including Garyville. But the price spike that followed was so big that Marathon made twice as much from its refining operations in the third quarter of 2005 as it had a year earlier. There has never been evidence of refineries' deliberately taking themselves offline, but it's not unthinkable. During the California electricity crisis of 2001, after all, energy producers like Williams Energy found that it made economic sense to withhold power from the California market—to turn down sales—because doing so sent prices way up.

Some have suggested that the lack of new refineries points to collusion on the part of refiners—an agreement to reduce capacity and divvy up the market, much as OPEC does for crude oil. But in refining today there's no need for a cartel; the investment decisions that the companies make have such a direct impact on prices that it's rational for each of them individually to limit capacity. And if Washington wants a scapegoat it might take a look at itself. By not vetting mergers more carefully, government regulators allowed many refiners to achieve "market power" (the ability to influence the market price of what they sell), and other regulators enhanced that power by mandating gasoline standards without considering competition. High gas prices usually provoke one of two explanations: either they're evidence of a conspiracy or they're just the result of the free market at work. The good news is that there's no conspiracy. The bad news is that there's also no free market.

—*James Surowiecki*

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN



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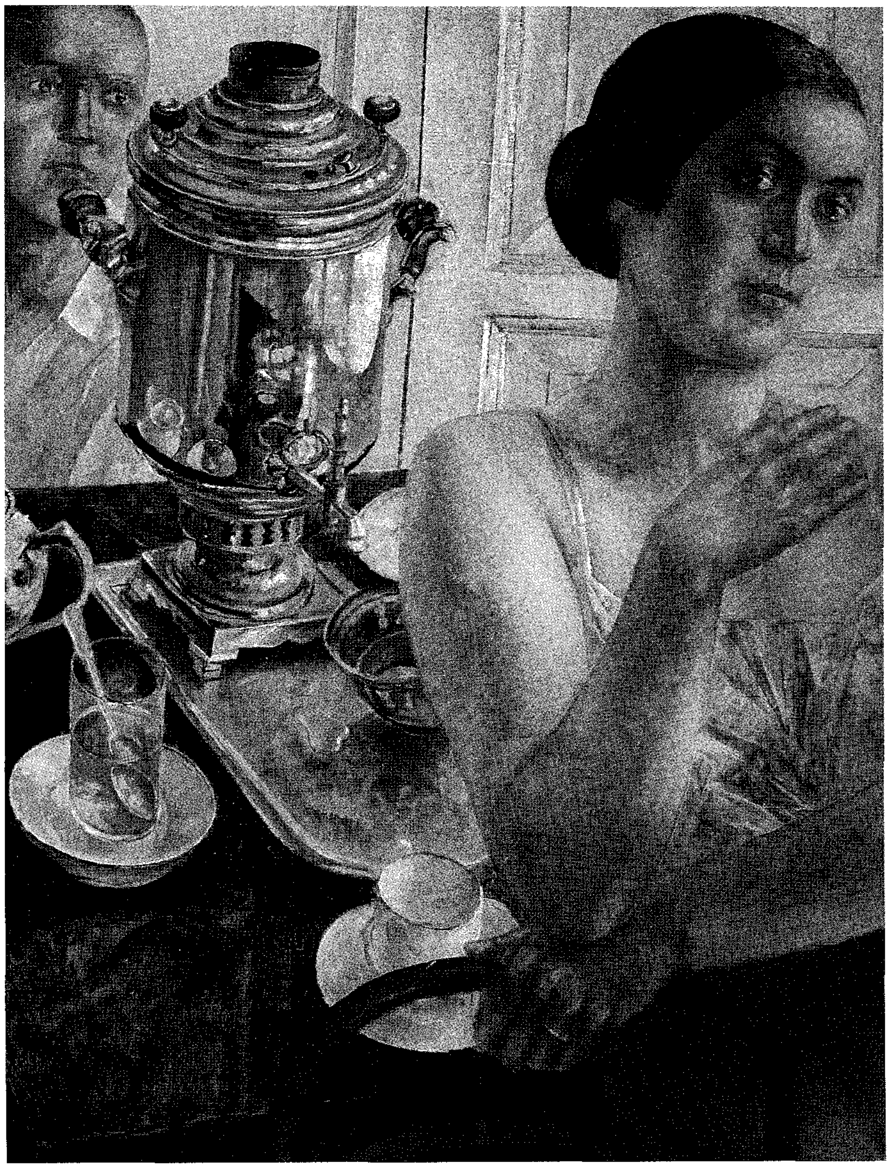
BY VASILY GROSSMAN

Nikolay Viktorovich had taken off his gown and was about to set off for home when Anna Aristarkhovna, who was famous for growing the best strawberries in town, said to him, breathlessly, "Nikolay Viktorovich, a colonel's just driven up outside."

"Well," Nikolay Viktorovich said, "I suppose that's what colonels do." And he began pulling his gown back on.

Anna Aristarkhovna's admiring gaze was, he knew, a tribute to his air of sleepy calm. In reality, however, the colonel's arrival alarmed him every bit as much as it alarmed Anna Aristarkhovna. And he and his wife were planning to go to the theatre in the evening; this might make him late.

Nikolay Viktorovich was someone who had no choice but to appear better in the eyes of women than he was in reality. Women had always liked him, and his innate gallantry—as well as a certain protectiveness that he couldn't help feeling with regard to his halo—prevented him from revealing the many ways in which he differed from his persona.



KUZMA PETROV-VODKIN, "AT THE SAMOVAR" (1926)/TRETYAKOV GALLERY/BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY

Even though his hair had gone gray, he was still a handsome figure—slim, tall, graceful, always tastefully dressed. His fine, distinguished face wore the expression that portrait painters aspire to give to the great, to those who are called upon to make our world more beautiful.

Women fell in love with him and never imagined that he was not in the least as he appeared; that, in truth, Nikolay Viktorovich was a very ordinary man, someone who didn't care about the problems of the world, knew nothing about literature or music, and adored comfort, elegant clothes, and massive saffron-yellow rings set with large precious stones. No, it never entered their heads that he had no special love for his work as a doctor and that what he really enjoyed was dining in fine restaurants, travelling first class when he went on holiday to Moscow, being seen with his dear Elena Petrovna—who was also graceful, tall, and handsome—in the most expensive seats of a theatre, and intercepting people's admiring glances, glances that said, "What a couple!"

He was too worldly, too much in love with high society, to work in a university clinic; instead, he had become the head doctor of the splendid government sanatorium in Kislovodsk. He never, of course, carried out any research, but it was very pleasant indeed to be surrounded by his medical staff as he strolled through marble-columned halls, exchanging casually respectful greetings with acquaintances who happened to be masters of the Soviet state.

His hero was Athos, from "The Three Musketeers." "That book is my bible," he would say to his friends.

As a young man, he had played poker for high stakes and been considered a connoisseur of racehorses. On visits to Moscow, he would sometimes telephone important figures who at one time or another had been his patients, men whose names had a place in the history of the Party and whose portraits appeared in *Pravda;* their warm

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responses never failed to gratify him.

It was the love he felt for his comfortable Moroccan leather armchair, for all his luxurious furniture, and his terror of bleak goods wagons with their tin teapots and small smoking stoves—it was this love of comfort and fear of bleakness that prompted his decision not to allow himself to be evacuated when the first motorized and mountain light-infantry units of the German Wehrmacht began to approach Kislovodsk.

Elena Petrovna, who liked the Germans no more than he did, went along with this decision. She, too, loved antique tables with precious inlays and mahogany settees and porcelain and crystal and fine carpets.

Elena Petrovna also loved clothes from abroad—especially those that provoked the envy of certain other women she knew, the wives of politicians and public figures. And, as she put on dresses the like of which no other lady in her circle had ever seen, her face would take on the modest, exhausted expression of a woman indifferent to vanity and frippery.

When Nikolay Viktorovich first saw a German motorized reconnaissance patrol pass by on the street, he felt dismayed and frightened. The faces of the German soldiers, the horned silhouettes of their submachine guns, the swastikas on their helmets, seemed unbearable, loathsome.

For perhaps the first time in his life he spent a sleepless night. What, in the end, did a Pavlovsk writing desk or a Turkoman carpet really matter? He had evidently acted frivolously, staying behind in a town that was going to be occupied.

All that night he kept thinking about his childhood friend Volodya Gladetsky, who had volunteered to fight in the Red Army during the civil war.

Gaunt, his cheeks pale and sunken, and wearing an old belted coat, Gladetsky had gone limping down the street toward the station, leaving behind him everything he loved: his home, his wife, and his sons. Years had passed without the two men seeing each other, but from time to time Nikolay Viktorovich had heard word of Gladetsky and the course his life had taken.

That first night of the occupation, it was as if he saw two paths: his own and Gladetsky's. How different they were!

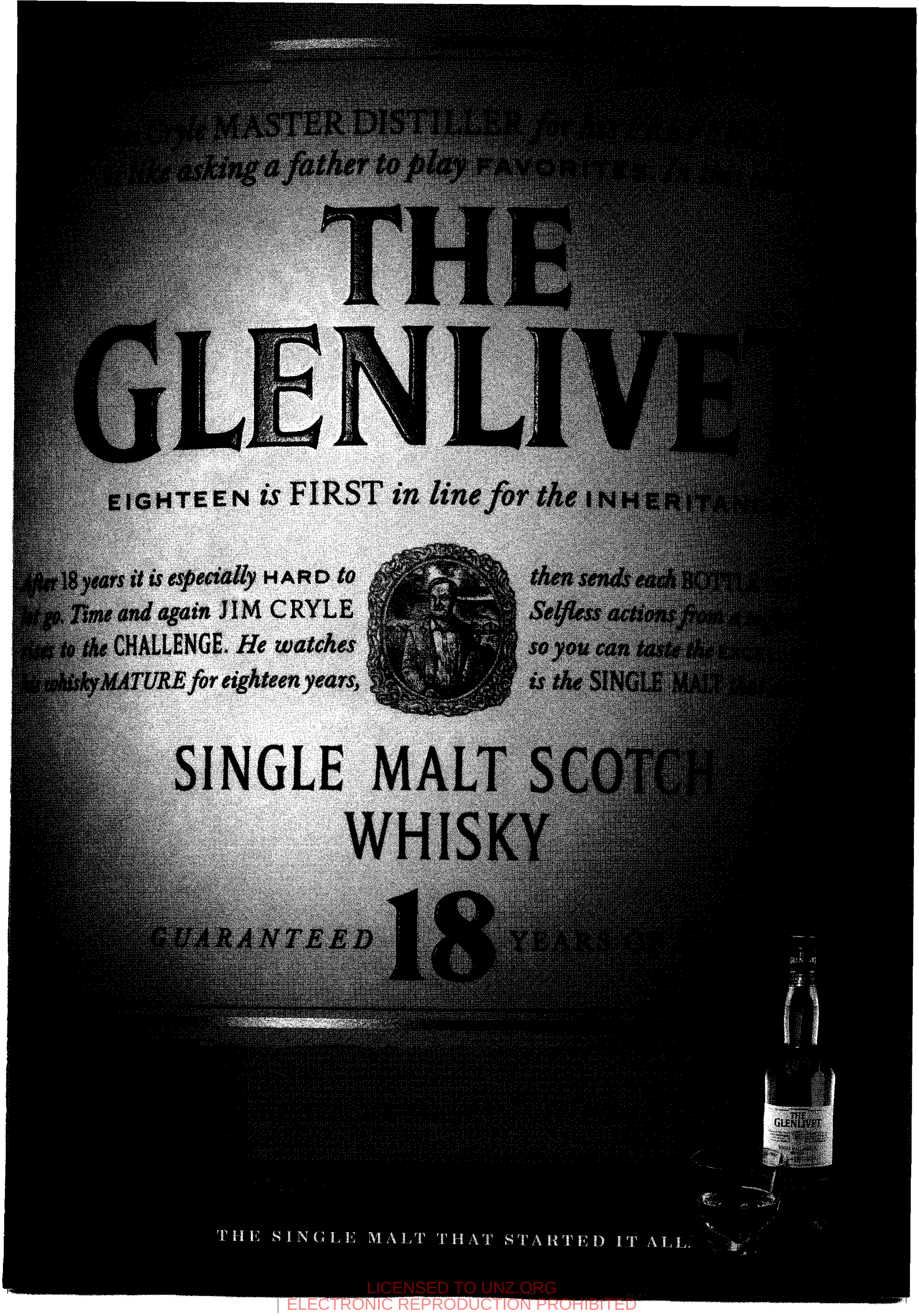
Under the tsarist regime, Gladetsky had been expelled during his last year of high school; he had been exiled to Siberia, then confined to the town where he was born. When war began, in 1914, he had been conscripted; after being wounded, toward the end of 1915, he had returned home. And his Bolshevik soul had always proved stronger than anything else that he held dear, and everything that was harshest and bloodiest in the life of his country and people had become his own life and his own fate.

SUE THE AUTHOR 1 P.M. – 3 P.M.
WEYANT

Nikolay Viktorovich, on the other hand, had never been a member of the Bolshevik underground or been pursued by the tsarist police; he had not led a battalion against Kolchak's forces during the civil war; he had not, like Gladetsky, been the commissar in charge of food rationing for an entire province during the famine of 1921. Nor, during Party meetings, had he forced himself to denounce friends from his student days who had joined the left and right oppositions. Nor had he spent days and nights without sleep on the vast construction sites of the Urals. Nor had he hurried through the dark to report to a man in a Kremlin office that was flooded with white electrical light. . . .

Help from various acquaintances had led to Nikolay Viktorovich's being exempted from service in the First Cavalry Army; he had studied in the faculty of medicine; he had lost his head over the beautiful Elena, who subsequently became his wife; he had journeyed to various villages, trading his family's coats and furs, as well as his father's hunting boots, for supplies of flour, pork fat, and honey, and, with these supplies, he had managed to keep his mother and his old aunt alive. During the storm and romance of the Revolution, he had lived far from romantically—although he had, admittedly, sometimes come back from the countryside not only with pork fat and honey but also with supplies of home-distilled vodka, and then, during evenings lit only by small oil lamps, there had been parties; he and his friends had danced, played charades, and exchanged kisses in frosty kitchens and dark corridors, while from outside, from the other side of windows hung with blankets, came the sounds of shots and the tramping of heavy boots.

The country had lived out its fate,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"'Morvern Callar' and 'The Sopranos' are written in a style utilizing the way people actually talk in Scotland, but also happily break those rules," he explains. The result of all that rule-breaking has resonated throughout the literary world, garnering Britain's prestigious Somerset Maugham, Encore, and Saltire prizes. In 2003, he landed on Granta magazine's list of the Best of Young British Novelists.

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When asked whether he starts his creative process by first establishing the story or the voice, the writer purrs, "I start with a large glass of The Glenlivet."

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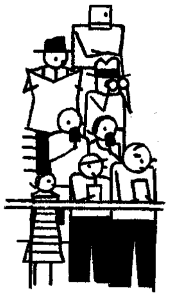
but Nikolay Viktorovich's own fate had been free of storms, calamities, hard labor, or war. There had been times of great victory, on battlefield or construction site, when he had been overwhelmed by despair—because a woman had rejected him. . . . Or when what had been a harsh and terrible year for the Russian people had for him been a year of light and love. . . .

And now here he was, standing by the dark window of his room, listening to the noise of war—to the grinding of tank treads and the guttural shouting of commands. The small points of light he could see were flashlights—flashlights held by German noncommissioned officers.



A year before the war, Nikolay Viktorovich had seen a man being admitted to the sanatorium—a gray-haired man with a lined face and olive-colored bags beneath his eyes—and had realized that this was his old friend from high school: Volodya Gladetsky.

It had been a strange meeting. The two men had been simultaneously overjoyed and wary; they had felt drawn to each other and repelled; they had wanted to talk openly and been afraid to talk openly; their former trust had suddenly been reborn, as if their days of whispering in the boys' bathroom about schoolboy pranks had come around again—and yet between Nikolay Viktorovich and the seriously ill Party official lay an abyss.

Each season of the year, as a rule, someone famous came to the sanatorium for treatment. Moscow would inform the doctors well in advance; a luxurious room would be prepared for the visitor; and for years afterward the staff would say things like "That was when we had Budyonny staying with us. . . ." At the time that Gladetsky arrived, an old Bolshevik had been staying with them, a famous academician and a friend of Lenin's. As a young man, sentenced to years in a tsarist jail, this Savva Feofilovich had written a well-known revolutionary song.

He and Gladetsky had seen quite a lot of each other. They went for walks and spent evenings together, and sometimes, if the old man was feeling poorly, they had supper together in Savva Feofilovich's room.

Once, Nikolay Viktorovich had chanced upon the two men as they were walking in the park. They'd all sat down for a while on a bench beside some laurels. Nikolay Viktorovich had felt something that was familiar yet strange, sweet yet painful, an emotion compounded of a sense of power—the power of the senior doctor who, without formalities, can enter any sick grandee's heart—and a sense of astonishment that he, Nikolay Viktorovich, should be sitting beside this thickset old man with a large head, thin gray hair, and a broad white hand that had often shaken the hand of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin.

Gladetsky said, "Nikolay Viktorovich and I were at school together, Savva Feofilovich. And I can remember one story where you yourself have a role."

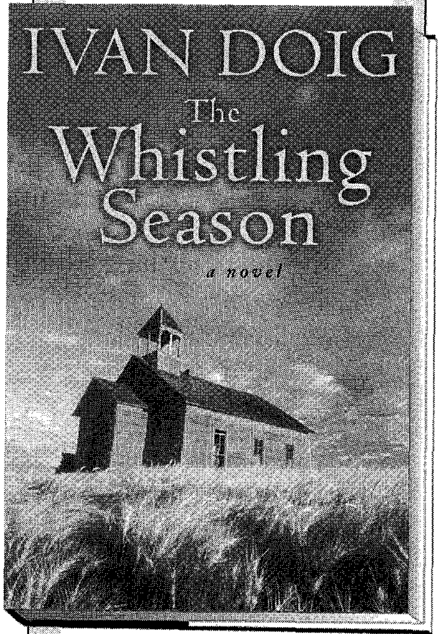
The old man expressed surprise, and Gladetsky related an incident that Nikolay Viktorovich had forgotten. One day long ago, when they were both still at school, Gladetsky had invited Nikolay Viktorovich to a meeting of a revolutionary circle; they were going to learn revolutionary songs. Asked afterward why he had not turned up, Nikolay Viktorovich said that he had also been invited to the name-day party of a girl he knew, a student at the same school. And that, it seemed, had marked the end of his career as a conspirator.

One of the songs the students sang that evening was the famous song that Savva Feofilovich had written in jail.

The old man laughed good-naturedly and said, "Two years before the war, you say? That was when I was a prisoner in the Warsaw Citadel."

During the course of a routine medical examination, Nikolay Viktorovich once said to Gladetsky, "I can't believe it. Savva Feofilovich's heart is in better shape than the hearts of men half his age. It sounds so young and strong!"

And, with suddenly renewed trust,



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with a surge of feeling, Gladetsky replied, "But he's a superman! He has the strength of a superman! And, believe me—I'm not saying this because he survived the Orlov prison, or the Warsaw Citadel, or years in the underground with hardly anything to eat, or exile in Yakutsk, or life as an émigré with only the clothes on his back. No, I'm saying this because he had the strength to denounce Bukharin in the name of the Revolution. Yes, he had the strength to demand that a man he knew to be innocent should be sentenced to death; he had the strength to expel talented young scientists from a research institute merely because their names were on certain blacklists. Do you think it's easy for a friend of Lenin's to do such things? Do you think it's easy to destroy the lives of children, women, and old men, to feel pity for them in the depths of *your* soul as you carry out acts of terrible cruelty in the name of the Revolution? I know only too well what it's like—believe me! Yes, there's no truer test of strength or weakness of soul."

The night the Germans arrived, Nikolay Viktorovich remembered this prewar encounter. Feeling that he was someone weak and pathetic, he said to Elena Petrovna, who still looked as young and beautiful as ever, "Lena, what have we gone and done? Now we're going to have to live with the Germans!"

In a serious voice, she replied, "It's nothing to feel good about, I know. But it doesn't matter, Kolya. Whoever we end up having to live with—whether it's Germans, Italians, or Romanians—there's one thing that will save us. We've always wanted to stay the people we are, but that doesn't mean that we wish anyone else ill. We'll survive."

"But it's awful. The Germans are here. And if we're still here, too, it's only really because of all our clutter."

Nikolay Viktorovich did not tell his wife how Gladetsky had laughed as he told an old comrade of Lenin's about the name-day party Nikolay Viktorovich had chosen over a meeting of a student revolutionary circle. It had been the name-day party of a high-school girl called Elena Petrovna Ksenofontova.

Elena Petrovna said crossly, "Why call it clutter? This clutter is years of our life. Our porcelain, our tulip-shaped crystal glasses, our pink ocean shells, our carpet—you said yourself that it smells of spring, that it's woven from the colors of April. It's who we are. It's the way we've lived our lives, and it's the way we'll go on living our lives. What else can we do except go on loving what we've loved all along?"

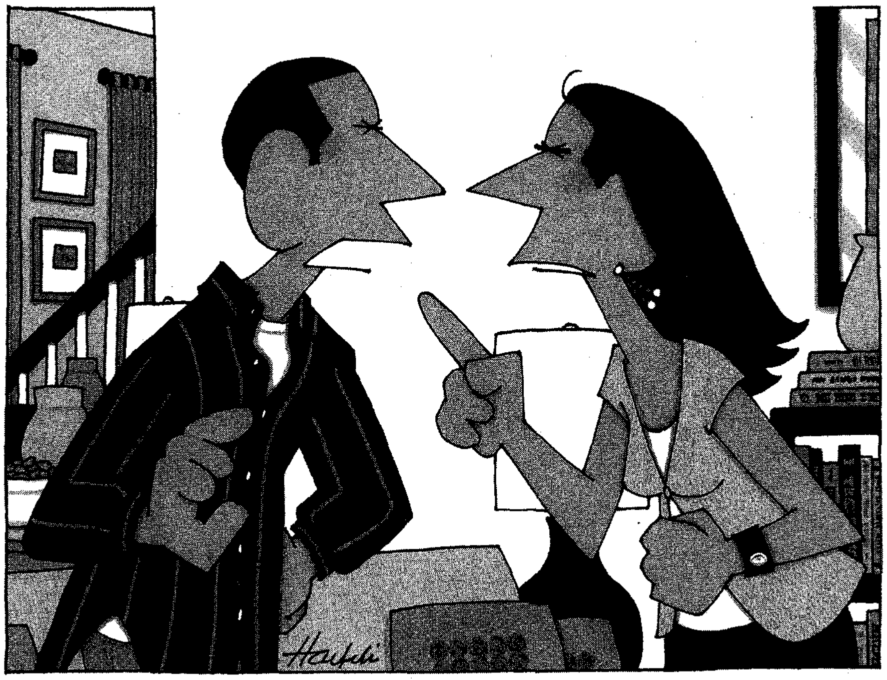
She struck the table several times with her long, narrow, and very white hand, and repeated obstinately, in time with the blows of her hand, "Yes, yes, yes, yes. It's who we are, and there's nothing we can do about it. It's who we are."

"You're very wise," he said. They seldom spoke seriously about their life, and her words had comforted him.

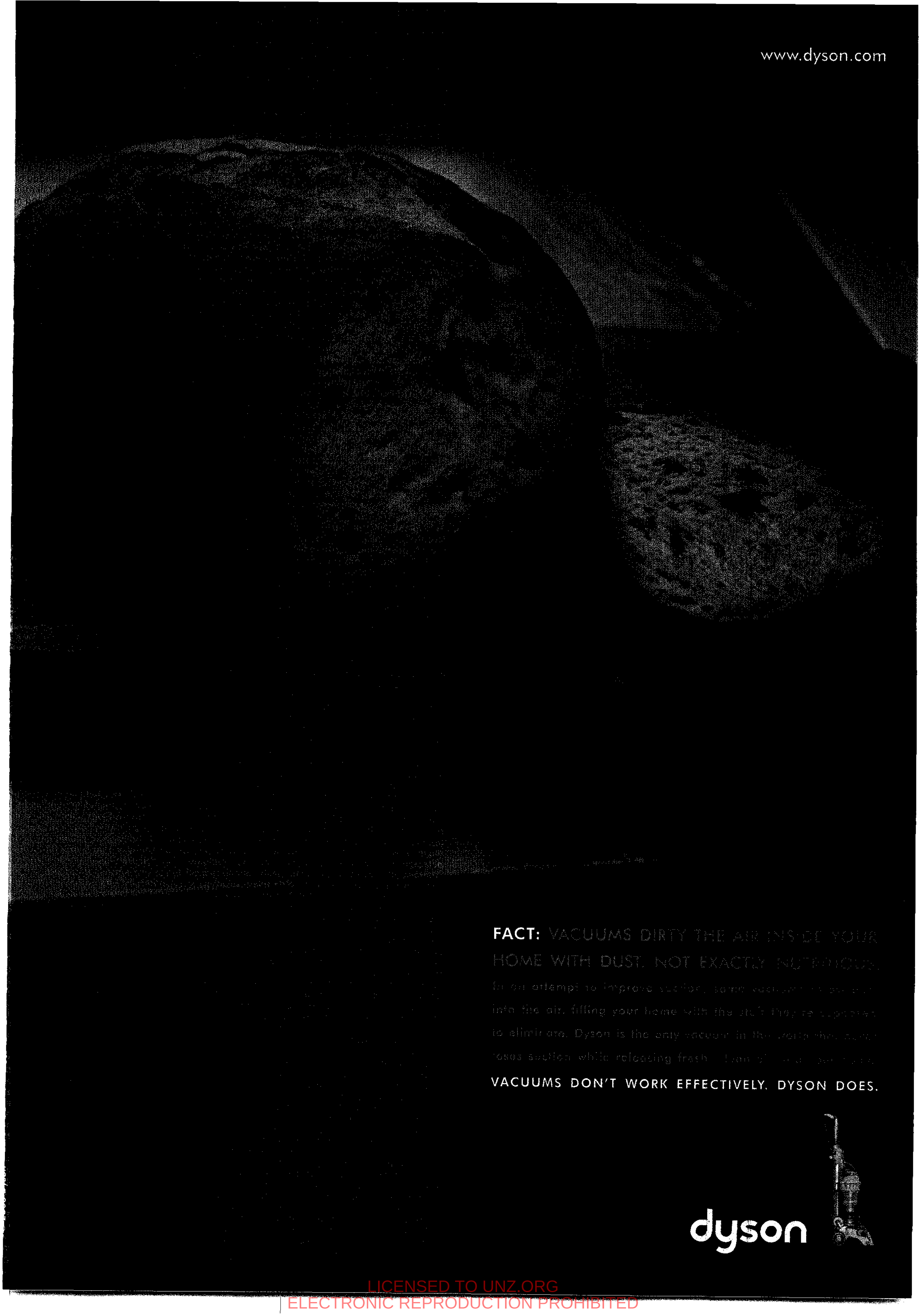
They went on living, and life was livable. Nikolay Viktorovich was called to the commandant's office and asked to work as a doctor in a hospital for wounded Red Army soldiers. He was given a good ration card, Elena Petrovna was given a somewhat less good ration card, and they were able to obtain bread, sugar, and dried peas. At home, they had stores of honey, condensed milk, and clarified butter; supplementing the German rations with her own supplies, Elena Petrovna was able to prepare meals that were ample and even quite tasty. It would be a long time before they ran out of coffee, and the milkmaid went on bringing good milk. It wasn't even any more expensive than it had been before—it was just that the money they paid her was no longer Russian.

At the market, there were people selling good-quality chickens, fresh eggs, and early vegetables, and at prices that really weren't that bad at all. And when they wanted something special they ate bread with pressed caviar; during the period of chaos while the Germans were approaching, Nikolay Viktorovich had brought home two large jars of caviar from the sanatorium storeroom.

Cafés were opened. German films were shown in the cinema. There were unbearably tedious films about the National Socialist Party and its success in reëducating unprincipled, dissipated good-for-nothings and turning them into strong-willed, politically conscious young militants. But there were good films as well; Nikolay Viktorovich and Elena Petrovna particularly liked one called "Rembrandt." A Russian-language theatre opened; the company included some excellent actors—and the famous Blumenthal-Tamarin was outstanding. At first, the



"If you're going to go down that road, be prepared for two-way traffic."



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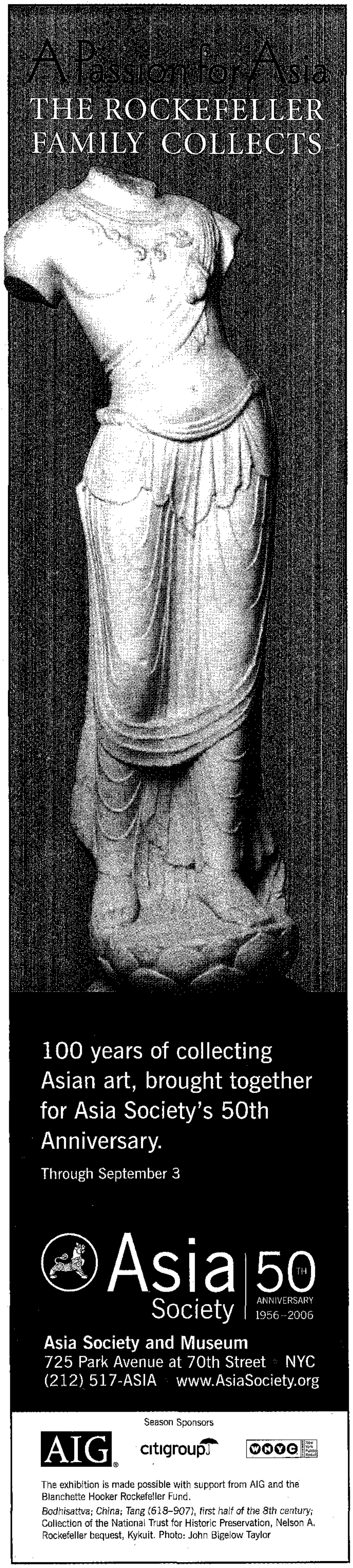
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Bodhisattva; China; Tang (618–907), first half of the 8th century; Collection of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Nelson A. Rockefeller bequest, Kykuit. Photo: John Bigelow Taylor

company's only production was of Schiller's "Intrigue and Love," but then it began putting on Ibsen, Hauptmann, and Chekhov—all in all, the theatre was quite tolerable. And there were, it turned out, some cultivated people left in the town—doctors, actors, and singers, and one very sweet and erudite man, a theatre artist from Leningrad. And so life carried on with all its little excitements, and, just as before the war, Nikolay Viktorovich's house was often full of people who could appreciate the charm of fine porcelain and crystal, the supple lines of antique furniture, and the exquisite designs of Persian carpets. And it turned out that these people preferred to keep their distance from the commandant and the town authorities, from the colonels and generals of Army Group A Headquarters, and that they were happy rather than disappointed if they failed to receive an invitation to a reception presided over by General List, the master of the Caucasus. But, if they did receive an invitation, it goes without saying that they put on their very best clothes and worried about whether their wives were dressed fashionably enough or whether they looked absurd and provincial.

There were three small wards in Nikolay Viktorovich's hospital, and he had two nurses and two assistant nurses. There were enough provisions in the storeroom to feed the wounded quite decently, and there was a supply of drugs and dressings, so Nikolay Viktorovich's main concern was not to do anything that might attract the attention of the German authorities; afraid that the less seriously wounded might be transferred to a camp, he continued to keep them in bed.

His little building in the depths of the sanatorium park had evidently been entirely forgotten by the Germans. The stronger patients played cards, flirted with the elderly nurses, and worshipped Nikolay Viktorovich, and it seemed to them that they owed their quiet, paradisiacal life to him alone.

When Nikolay Viktorovich came home from the hospital, his wife would ask, "Well, how are our boys today?" They had no children, and so that is how the two of them referred to the wounded young soldiers. And Nikolay Viktorovich would laugh as he told his wife funny stories about life in the little hospital.

But the Germans had not entirely forgotten about the little building in the depths of the park. One day, Nikolay Viktorovich was called to the Town Council medical department and asked to produce a list of all the wounded under his supervision. Nikolay Viktorovich felt anxious as he compiled the list, but the official on duty did not even read it. He threw it carelessly into a file; evidently it was just a bureaucratic formality.

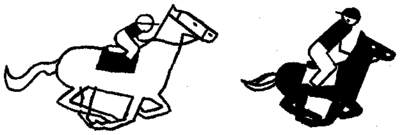
The Germans continued to advance. The military bulletins in the newspapers sounded more triumphant than ever, and Nikolay Viktorovich tried not to read them.

There were rumors that the sanatoriums would soon be reopening, and that not only colonels and generals but also the German intelligentsia would be coming for treatment.

It appeared that there were some people who had had well-educated Germans billeted to them, Germans who seemed to be afraid of Hitler and Himmler and who seemed to disapprove of the horrors reported by people living near the Gestapo headquarters.

All in all, then, life wasn't really so very different from the life they had known before. Once again, Nikolay Viktorovich found himself delighting in the comfort of his house and the beauty and charm of his wife; once again, he was sure that he had been right to prefer Elena Petrovna Ksenofontova's name-day party to the meeting of the revolutionary circle.

But now, just as Nikolay Viktorovich was about to go home, intending to relax for a while and then have something to eat before going with his wife to see a performance of Gerhart Hauptmann's "The Sunken Bell," a car had crunched over the gravel and up to the little building in the park. Out of it had



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MUST READS OF 2006

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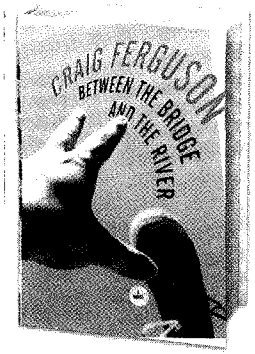
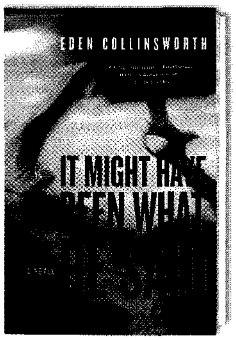

CRAIG FERGUSON
BETWEEN THE BRIDGE AND THE RIVER

Between the Bridge and the River
By Craig Ferguson

In this hilarious satire of the pompous, the cruel, and the sanctimonious, CBS-TV's late-night funnyman weaves a brilliant tale of life, death, love, and Carl Jung peopled by ne'er-do-wells who prove that even characters in possession of the blackest hearts can achieve redemption.


EDEN COLLINSWORTH
IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN WHAT HE SAID

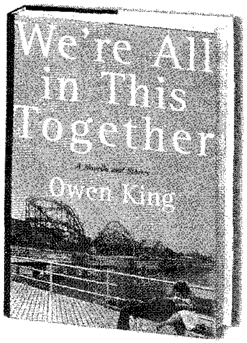
It Might Have Been What He Said
By Eden Collinsworth

A soignée book-publishing executive (much like the author herself) has attempted to murder her husband—yet can't recall why. Tracking the glamorous couple in Manhattan, the Amazon, L.A., and Paris, this brisk page-turner has the makings of a summer blockbuster.

SEND ME
PATRICK RYAN

Send Me
By Patrick Ryan

In a masterly first effort, Ryan imbues each character in this family saga with a distinct and memorable persona. Set in the NASA-oriented Florida of the nineteen-sixties, "Send Me" parses the major turning points in the Kerrigans' interwoven yet fraying lives.


We're All in This Together
Owen King

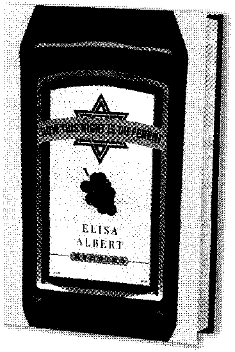
We're All in This Together
By Owen King

Idiosyncratic personalities populate this tender, mature, and politically acerbic novella by the son of Stephen King that's set in Maine, the literary family's stomping grounds. It ponders the question: How do we fight when we know we're right?

THE SECOND COMING OF Mavala Shikongo
Peter Orner

The Second Coming of Mavala Shikongo
By Peter Orner

At a woebegone corner of Namibia, lonely, languid days meld into another for volunteer teacher Larry Kaplanski—until Mavala Shikongo arrives, a woman amongst a motley assemblage of heat-crazed men. Inspired by the author's own experiences, this sharply written book is imbued with humor and tragedy.


HOW THIS NIGHT IS DIFFERENT
ELISA ALBERT

How This Night Is Different
By Elisa Albert

Turning a phrase from the Passover *Haggadah*, these short stories limn the lives of contemporary Jews. We meet them at celebrations and at personal crossroads. Despite the (mostly female) characters' painful self-awareness, they manage to find solace in ancient rituals.

☐ **We're All in This Together**
By Owen King

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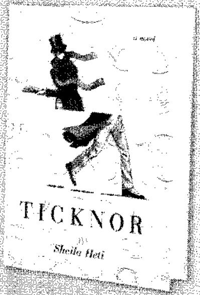
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FRIDAY HARBOR, 10 A.M.

In the distance, grand
as an open-air showroom
of upended pianos,

a flotilla of yachts:
each a church equipped
with a spar for steeple,

or a high-tech antenna
tuned in to money,
the favored station.

Still, now there's static
on the harbor channel,
a sputter of rain

speckling the water,
and under the oddly
sunny cloud cover

the Sound breaks in scallops,
as wave overlaps
with shoreward wave,

carves itself into what
might be a pebbly
black-and-white woodcut,

on which somebody, all wet,
all elbows, is rowing
his rowboat in like a robot.

—*Mary Jo Salter*

stepped a stout man with high cheekbones and a snub nose, with gray eyes and fair hair; he could have been a Soviet district agronomist, or the manager of a shop, or someone giving a talk on social insurance at a meeting of a domestic workers' Party committee.

It was clear, however, from the peaked cap, the belt, the armband, the shoulder straps on his gray uniform, and the swastika and iron cross on his chest that he was a Gestapo officer, equal in rank to a Wehrmacht colonel.

As always, Nikolay Viktorovich looked tall and sleek; his face had a handsome glow, his hair was an elegant shade of silver, and his eyes were almost indecently expressive. Beside this runt of a potbellied German, a man who looked as if he had been cobbled together out of some kind of waste matter, Nikolay Viktorovich resembled a distinguished landowner who enjoyed the favors of Fortune; he could have been taken for an important Russian aristocrat or maybe some foreign duke.

But that is not how it was at all.

"*Sie sprechen Deutsch*?"

"*Jawohl*," Nikolay Viktorovich replied. When he was a boy, he had learned German from a governess named Augusta Karlovna.

"Heavens!" he said to himself, realizing what grace, what coquettish eagerness, what a passionate desire to seem nice, sweet, and obedient he had infused into his cooing "*Jawohl.*"

The German, on hearing the voice of the gray-haired aristocrat and looking him quickly up and down through almost divinely omniscient eyes—the eyes of a being whose actions were performed in a higher realm, where nothing existed but life and death—immediately understood what kind of man he was talking to.

The stout, stocky Gestapo officer had before him the task of destroying vast mountains of human flesh.

There were thousands of human spirits that he had to break—to cleave or shatter, to bend or fragment: yes, there were Catholics and the Orthodox, there were fighter pilots, princes who were passionate monarchists, Party functionaries, inspired poets who had trampled over every existing convention, nuns whose spiritual frenzy had led them to renounce the world. When life is under threat, everything cracks and splits apart, everything turns upside down, sometimes slowly, sometimes with obstinate resistance, sometimes yielding with an ease that makes you want to laugh. But the result is always the same, and the exceptions only prove the law. Like children in front of a Christmas tree, people pushed and shoved as they reached out to grab the simple, crude little toy that a Gestapo Santa Claus was now offering them, now snatching away. . . . Yes, everyone wants to live—Shmulik from the ghetto no less than Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

It was not a complicated matter, and the Gestapo bureaucrat explained everything concisely and clearly, without a single coarse or cynical word, and he even came out with a few sentences that were not strictly necessary: about how all civilized people understand that, when it comes to matters of worldwide historical importance, there can be only one morality—the morality of state expediency. In Germany, doctors had understood this long ago.

Nikolay Viktorovich listened, nodding quickly and obediently, and the look in his eyes was that of an attentive pupil, a pupil determined to memorize as accurately and conscientiously as possible everything that his teacher says. Or perhaps it could better be described as a look of servility, an expression of obsequious devotion to strength.

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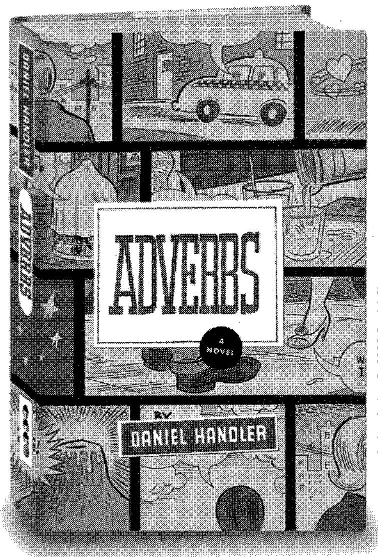
"Handler's killer hook is his gymnastic prose ... the linguistic somersaults, the brilliantly turned reminders that there are a million ways to describe love and none of them will be the last word."
—New York Times Book Review



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Examining this sanatorium doctor, this well-groomed aristocrat, the Gestapo bureaucrat thought good-naturedly that he didn't really have the right to laugh at him, after all. This man had been exposed to overwhelming temptation; he had been enslaved by his many years of sweet living in the wonderful climate of a spa town, among flower beds and bubbling, health-giving Russian water. No doubt he had many well-tailored Russian suits and an apartment full of expensive antique furniture. And no doubt this apartment was well stocked with delicacies. No doubt he regularly ate Russian caviar that he had stolen from the sanatorium stores. No doubt he collected fine crystal, or amber cigarette holders, or walking sticks with ivory handles. . . . And there was no doubt at all that he had a beautiful wife.

The stocky, thick-necked German, this man who looked as if he had been cobbled together out of some kind of waste matter, was by no means simpleminded. His work had to do with the human soul, that mystery of mysteries; when it came to clarity of vision, and one or two other things, this man could vie with God.

The men left the hospital together, and Nikolay Viktorovich saw two German sentries standing beside the doors; it was no longer possible for anyone to come or go freely.

The Gestapo bureaucrat offered to drive Nikolay Viktorovich home. Sitting in silence on the hard seats of the staff car, they looked out at the friendly streets and comfortable houses of the world-famous spa town.

Before saying goodbye to Nikolay Viktorovich, the German quickly went through everything once again: "A car will come for you in the morning. The hospital staff will have to leave the building for a brief period while you attend to the medical side of proceedings. Once the covered trucks have left the hospital, it must be explained to the staff that the chronically ill and the seriously wounded have been transferred, on instructions from higher authorities, to a special hospital outside of town. It is, of course, crucial that you, Nikolay Viktorovich, should exercise discretion; it is probably of more importance to you than to anyone that this operation should not attract publicity."

Nikolay Viktorovich recounted all this to Elena Petrovna and said, "Forgive me!"

After a minute or two of silence, she said, "And I'd got everything ready for the theatre. I'd taken your suit out and ironed my dress."

He didn't answer. She went on, "You're right. There's nothing else you can do."

"I've just had a thought, you know," Nikolay Viktorovich said. "In twenty years, I've never once been to the theatre without you."

"I'm going with you this time, too. This is another theatre we're going to together."

"You're out of your mind!" he shouted. "Why?"

"You can't stay. So how can I?"

He began kissing her hands. She put her arms around his neck and kissed him on the lips; she kissed his gray hair.

"My handsome one," she said. "What a lot of orphans we're going to leave behind."

"My poor boys—but there's nothing I can do for them, only this."

"It wasn't them I meant. I meant our own orphans."

They behaved very vulgarly. They put on the clothes she had got ready for the theatre, and she doused herself with French perfume. Then they had supper. They ate pressed caviar and drank wine; he clinked glasses with her and kissed her fingers as if they were young lovers in a restaurant. Then they wound up the phonograph, danced to vulgar songs by Vertinsky, and wept because they worshipped Vertinsky. Then they said goodbye to their children—and this was more vulgar still. They kissed their porcelain cups goodbye; they kissed their paintings goodbye. They stroked their carpets and their mahogany furniture. He opened her wardrobe and kissed her underwear and her slippers.

Then, in a harsh voice, she said, "And now poison me, as if I were a mad dog—and poison yourself!" ♦

—1962-63

(*Translated, from the Russian, by Robert and Elizabeth Chandler.*)

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LIFE DURING WARTIME

SIERRA LEONE, 1997

BY CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE

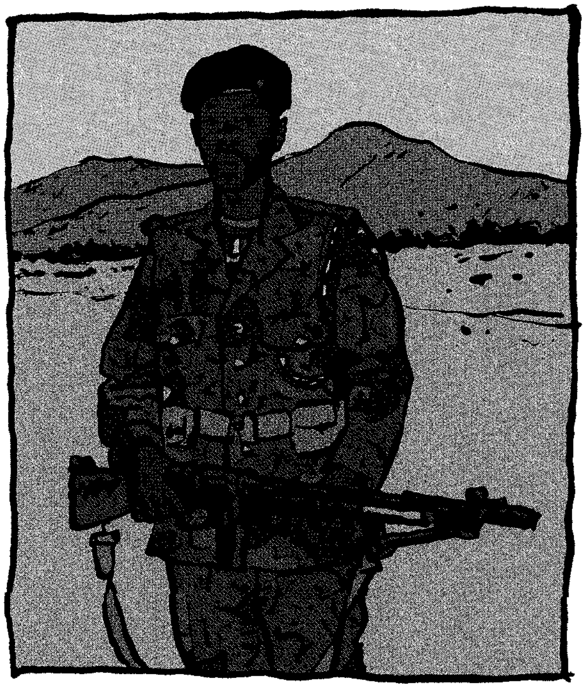
It was a Saturday in 1984. I was playing with my little brother, Kenechukwu, near the water tank in our large, flower-filled compound in Nsukka—the dusty, serene university town in eastern Nigeria where I grew up. My mother stood by the back door and said, "*Bianu kene mmadu.*" Come and greet somebody. Our new houseboy had arrived. He was sitting on a sofa in the living room, his legs cradling a black plastic bag that held his belongings.

"Good afternoon," Kenechukwu and I said. "*Nno.*" Welcome.

Later, after my mother showed Fide his room, in the detached boys' quarters behind the house, she told us, "Fide has come from the village and he has never seen a telephone or a gas cooker. So we will all help teach him and get him settled."

I stared at Fide, fascinated. Our former houseboy, who had left the week before after stealing some money from my father's study, had been knowingly urban; he had sometimes even fixed the stereo. Fide had never seen a refrigerator. He was light-skinned, and his lips were so thick and wide they took up most of his face. He spoke a rural dialect of Igbo that was not Anglicized, like ours, and he chewed rice with his mouth open—you could see the rice, soggy like old cereal, until he swallowed. When he answered the phone, he said, "Hold on," as we had taught him to, but then he dropped the receiver back on the cradle. He washed our clothes in metal basins, and pegged them on the line tied from the mango to the guava tree in the back yard. It took him hours. At first, my mother shouted, "Don't stop your work to stare at every single lizard that goes by!" Later, she left him alone until he was done.

Kenechukwu and I sat on the steps while he worked. On hot afternoons when the sun made topaz patterns on the glass louvres of the kitchen, Fide told us stories about birds—folk stories in which birds flew up to the sky to ask God for rain, and nature stories in which birds made their nests with bits of hair they had picked up outside the barber's hut in his village. "I can catch some birds for you," he said. And he dropped bread crumbs in a staggered line from the dustbin outside, up the short steps that led to the house, through the open back door, and into the kitchen. He crouched behind the door. When the birds arrived in the kitchen, he slammed the door and dashed after them. Once, he cracked a louvre; once, he tore the mosquito netting on the window; once, he broke a bowl. But he always caught the birds. He put them in punctured cartons for us and we fed them bread and *garri*. The birds died after a day or two. One lasted four days, and when, finally, it died Fide held its rigid feathery form in his hand and said, joking, "It's in the sky now, asking God for bread." Years later, after Fide died, I would think about this: a bird raising a stiff wing to ask God for bread.



EMMANUEL GUIBERT

My mother often shouted at Fide. She was creative with her Igbo insults. "You are a fat millipede, *nnukwu esu!*" she'd say when he took too long with a task. "Look at him, *ike akpi*, with the buttocks of a scorpion," when he forgot yet another thing she'd asked him to do. Or, "May dogs lick your eyes!" when he didn't tell the truth. She asked Fide to start dinner in the afternoon because it took him so long—*jollof* rice alone kept him busy for four hours. One afternoon stands out in my mind. Fide was at the Formica-topped kitchen table, scraping the scales off a tilapia with a knife. He worked with slow, deliberate motions—scrape, pause, scrape, pause. There were transparent scales on his chin, on his arms, on the floor. "You're taking forever to do that!" I said. "It's like preparing a body for a funeral," Fide said. "You take your time to do it well." It was a joke, and he was laughing. But, after he died, I would think about this, too.

Fide was enrolled in a commercial school, the Universal Secretarial Academy, a grand name for a small building that had four rooms and rusty typewriters, and a grander abbreviation. On his schoolbooks, beneath "Fide Abonyi," Fide wrote, in bold, proud letters, "U.S.A."

When my brothers borrowed videotapes of British and American films from friends, Fide watched them with us. When we borrowed books from the library, Fide would hold them and move his lips. When there were military coups in faraway Lagos, my father placed the radio on the dining table and Fide joined us as we crowded around and listened to announcements spoken in English with a northern Nigerian accent, interspersed with stretches of melancholy martial music. The coup in 1993 happened on a blustery Harmattan day. General Sani Abacha had taken over the government. "Fellow-Nigerians," he began, and already we were numb. Coup announcements made you numb: the choicelessness, the fact that you were being told just for your information, just so that you would not be surprised to see a different portrait on the walls of airports and government offices. Because there was nothing you could do about it.

It was the custom to "start a life" for your houseboy or housegirl, after he or she had been with you long enough. Fide was with us for twelve years. When my parents asked him what he wanted to do after he left us, they hoped that he would want to continue his secretarial studies. But Fide wanted to join the Army, and did so.

At first, he wrote excited letters, and sent pictures of himself in camouflage holding a long, gleaming gun. He took special pride in his boots and wrote about how he polished them with Kiwi polish, the way he had polished the shoes my father wore to his lectures. His handwriting was barely legible and his English was comic. "Hungry is killing me," he said. He wrote about the poor state of the barracks. He wrote about not being paid. Slowly, the letters cooled. Then, in a hasty letter, he wrote that he might be sent to Liberia, as part of the Nigerian Peacekeeping Force. Civil war was raging there. People were being skinned alive, he wrote. People were being dragged to their deaths.

"He won't go to Liberia," my father said. "He'll be fine."

Fide did not go to Liberia. Months later, a military coup took place in Sierra Leone. And General Sani Abacha, who routinely killed activists, who routinely shut down the media, who routinely jailed opponents, decided to send in Nigerian troops to restore democracy.

When my parents told me that Fide had died—he was blown up by a land mine in Sierra Leone, on September 3, 1997—I stared at them for a while and then started to smile because I knew that they were wrong.

"Which Fide?" I asked, as if he were not the only Fide we knew.

"Our own Fide," my mother said, and those words will never leave me, because even as grief enveloped me I realized how lovely they were. *Our own Fide.* He was our own. ♦

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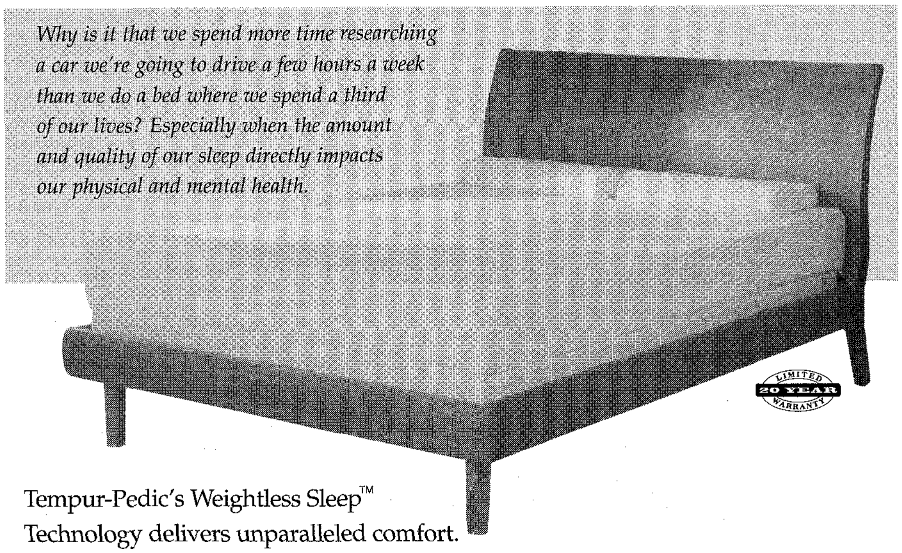

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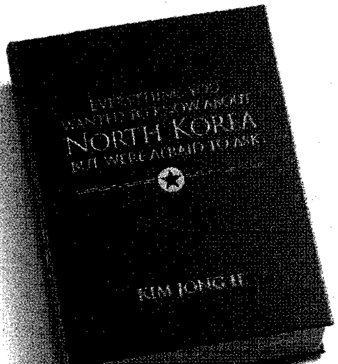

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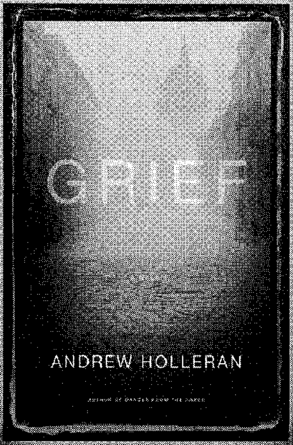

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PERSONAL HISTORY

MEETING E.P.

A Marine pilot's literary mission.

BY SAMUEL HYNES

Anacostia was a bitch to go into, back in the early fifties when I flew there. It wasn't the strip itself that was the problem; it was long enough for any plane I was likely to fly, and there were no obstacles—no tall chimneys, no power lines strung across the approach. What worried me about Anacostia was the traffic: the air over the Potomac was just too full of planes. Two military airfields ran along the east bank of the river, end to end: Anacostia Naval Air Station (to the north) and Bolling Air Force Base (to the south) were so close together that their two main runways were really one long runway. If you landed at Anacostia heading south, and touched down a little long, you'd find yourself looking up the stacks of an Air Force jet waiting to take off; if you took off heading north, you'd have to watch over your shoulder for the bomber thundering up out of Bolling.

That wasn't all. On the other side of the river, maybe a mile away from the two military fields, Washington National Airport spread an umbrella of commercial air traffic over the whole area. Passenger planes landing and taking off there cut through Air Force and Navy airspace as though it were theirs. A few years earlier, a Bolivian pilot in a P-38 approaching Bolling, or maybe just sightseeing, had let down on top of an Eastern Airlines DC-4 heading into Washington National. The Bolivian survived the collision, but everyone on the DC-4 died in the river, including the *New Yorker* cartoonist Helen Hokinson and a couple of politicians. So I went into Anacostia that August morning in 1953 nervously, with my head on a swivel.

The flight up from North Carolina had been pleasant, like a drive in the country. The day was what summer days in that section usually are—hot and sweaty at ground level but cooling as you climb, the sky a bleached-out blue, visibility unlimited except toward the sun, where heat haze blurs the line between earth and sky. No need to navigate on a day like this: just head north, sit back, and look around. Below my right wing, the Outer Banks are sand-bright, with a line of white waves breaking along the ocean side. Farther out, the whole Atlantic lies blue beyond blue, flashing light up at me. To the west, green fields stretch and fade into a different blue at the horizon.

Up here, the plane seems to float, scarcely moving, while the land scrolls past below. Here comes Norfolk: along the beach I can see the wakes of small boats drawing white lines in the surf—maybe marines practicing island landings. Beyond, in Chesapeake Bay, capital ships lie at anchor—a battleship, a cruiser—surrounded by the smaller ships that serve them.

We continue north, the plane and I, along the west side of the bay. At the mouth of the Potomac, I turn northwest, and there's Washington and its monuments ahead and, on the opposite shore, Bolling and Anacostia. The crowded air begins here.

And so does a certain nervousness. It's not just the air traffic; it's the mission I'm on. Here I am, a Marine captain in his Marine uniform in a Marine airplane, flying into Washington to visit a man who has been accused of being a traitor to his country—my country. Isn't that "conduct unbecoming"? Isn't it against the rules, Navy regs and all that? If the Navy admirals knew, would they let me park my plane on their flight line? But of course they couldn't know that this Marine captain taxiing in has another life, in which he is trying to be a scholar, a professor, a literary critic, maybe even an intellectual.

We'd built that other life together, my wife, Liz, and I, in the years after the Second World War. I went back to college in Minnesota (while Liz worked

HANS GROENHOFF/NASM/SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

at the phone company), and then to graduate school in New York (she worked in a bookstore), until our money and my tolerance for going to school ran out. Then I heard of a teaching job at a small Pennsylvania college. It wasn't a very promising one—just a one-year appointment as an instructor. But then I wasn't a very promising job candidate—hadn't written my dissertation, had no teaching experience, didn't know much about anything except flying. So I took it.

For that year, and then for another, and another, I played the role of a college teacher, and we lived a college life. I taught my classes, went to faculty meetings, wrote an article, went to a conference. I even smoked a pipe and wore a tweed jacket with leather patches on the elbows. Liz worked in the college bookstore, and played bridge with the other wives, and had a baby—a girl we named Miranda, after the daughter in "The Tempest": Miranda, she who is to be wondered at. Girls in my classes knitted bootees for her.

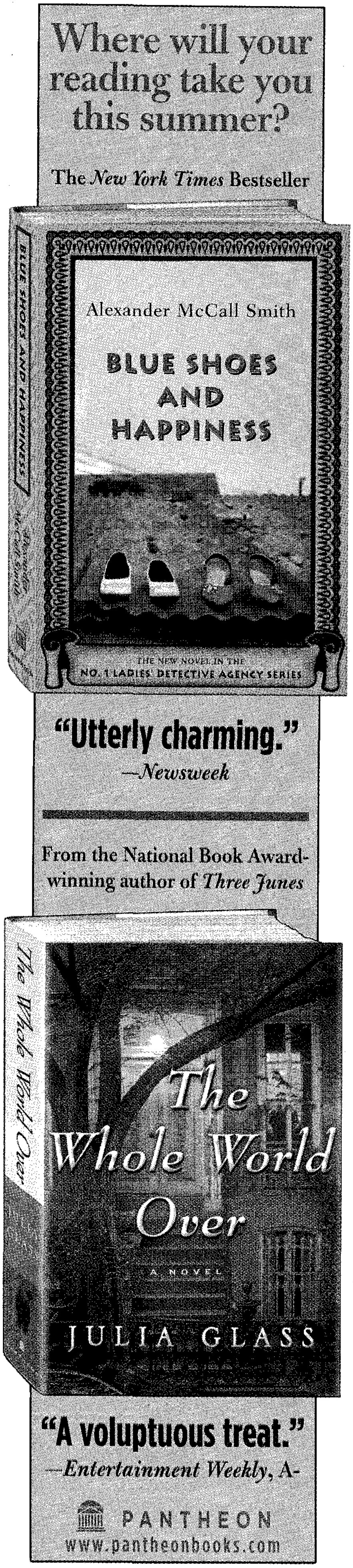
We were broke most of the time, and our future was uncertain, but we were a family, and I was teaching—eight-o'clock classes, six days a week, but teaching. It was a good life. In the euphoria of it all, I applied for a Fulbright fellowship to England.

New Year's Eve, 1951: I came home late from my office at the college; I'd been reading term papers, or maybe trying to write a lecture on some book I'd only just read. A long envelope was sticking up out of the mailbox. My Fulbright! But it wasn't. "Official, Marine Corps," the envelope said. And, inside, "Subject: return to active duty," and "You will report . . ." and "travel expenses will be . . ." and so on. I was back in the Marines.

As I read the letter I felt a surprising exhilaration. I was still a pilot, then, a combat pilot with a place in a squadron somewhere; I still belonged in the world of air and engines—the years in the classrooms hadn't changed that.

Then came the reality. I had a job. I was a teacher with a sort of career started. I was also a husband, and the father of one and a half kids. (Liz was pregnant again.) What would become of them if I swanned off to Korea? What if I got myself killed? But an inner voice said, It's not your choice. Those papers in your hand aren't suggestions—they're orders. You have to go. And, besides, you should go to this war, because you already know how to do it. In from the bullpen comes the trusty reliever, tired, with a sore arm, old (I was twenty-seven), but ready to go.

But I wasn't ready, not quite. Through the spring term of '52, I taught and



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stalled. In February, I was told I'd got the Fulbright; it was like finding a winning lottery ticket too late to cash it in. In March, my second daughter, Joanna, was born. In June, we packed up, and I put Liz and the girls on a train for Alabama, where Liz's mother lived, and reported for duty at the nearest naval air station, Willow Grove (pilots called it Willie's Grave).

The Marine Corps didn't exactly tell me what to do; it offered options. I could go straight back to combat flying. I knew what that would be like—old friends from my war were doing it already: flying close-support strikes, diving low over enemy troops, dropping bombs or napalm, firing rockets, and getting the hell out of there. It was what I'd done at Okinawa.

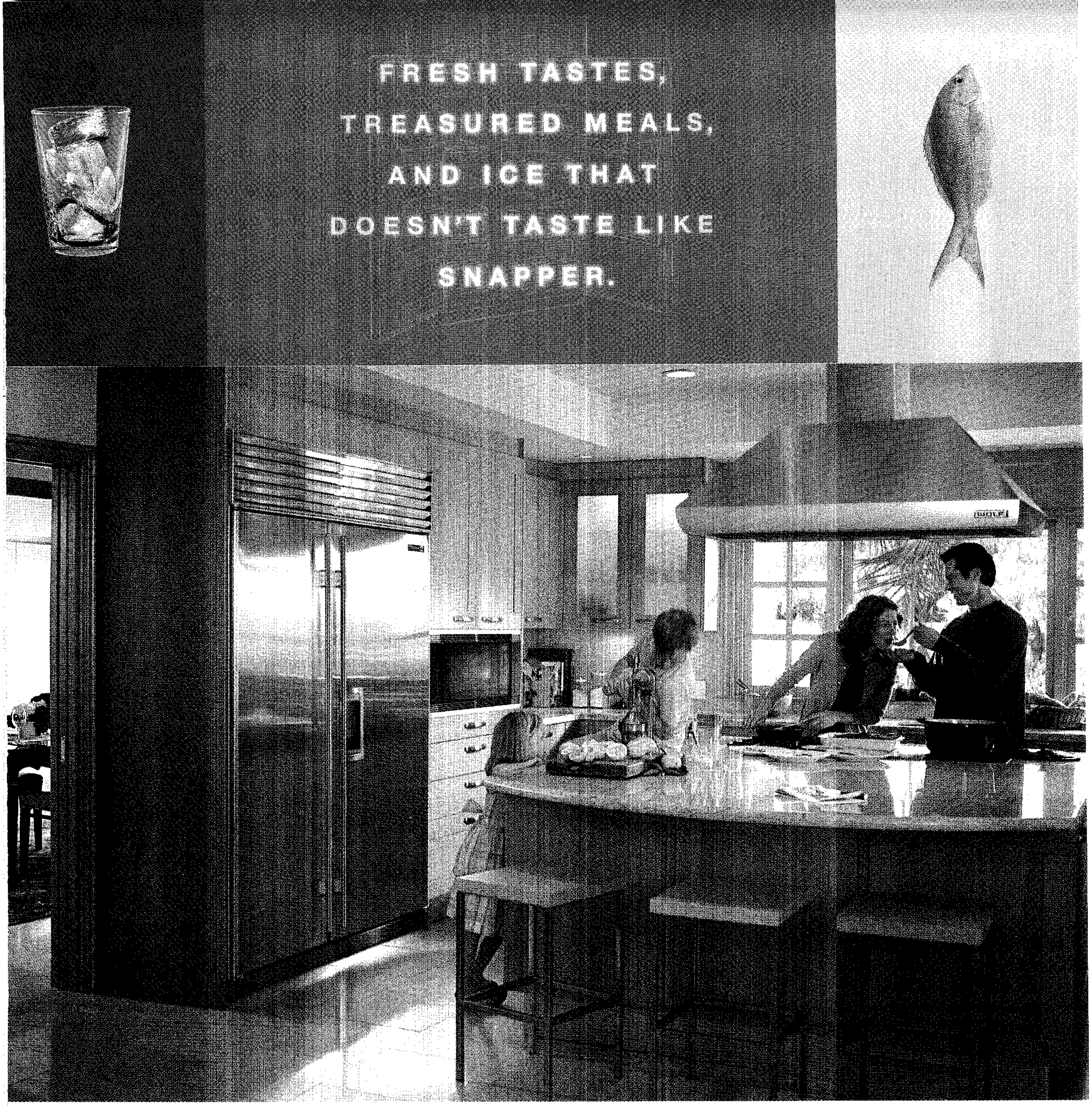
If I preferred not to fly (implication: if I was chicken, if I should never have had a Marine commission in the first place), I could ground myself and take a desk job, be an adjutant, or a quartermaster, or a personnel officer. That option was unthinkable. First, because marines believe that in the Corps everybody fights; there are no noncombatant jobs. (This may not be true, but it's what they believe.) And, second, because flying is a life, like a sex life, that no normal guy would give up if he didn't absolutely have to.

The third option was a compromise: stay on flight orders but serve on the ground as a fighter director; sit in a dark room in front of a pale-green radar screen, guiding night fighters to their targets, letting them get shot at instead of you. And fly in your spare time, to keep your skills polished. Like all compromises, this one felt shabby and soiled—the weak way out. But it was the one I chose. I would join a G.C.I. (Ground Control Intercept) squadron at Cherry Point, North Carolina, and learn how to be a controller.

No. 12 Kimes Street was a house in Married Officers' Quarters, outside the main gate of the air station. The address was Havelock, North Carolina, but there wasn't much of a town there. Everything we needed was inside the gates: the PX, a movie theatre, a gymnasium, clubs for officers and enlisted men, Bachelor Officers' Quarters, barracks for the men. If you were a marine, you got whatever you needed on the base; outside was just a place where you did your family living.

Every house on Kimes Street was exactly like all the others: a one-story cube with two bedrooms, a picture window that looked across the street at an identical picture window, and a screened-in porch at the side. They were all painted the same color, inside and out—Marine Corps cream. You weren't allowed to change that. If small children left their own front yard, they got lost and had to be hunted for.

The families who lived in these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houses were also identical: one captain, one captain's wife, and two captain's children. And so were the lives they lived there. Every morning, the captains went to work on the base while their wives cleaned their houses and went shopping at the PX, and the kids played together in the common back yard behind the houses, where the Marine Corps had set up swings and slides and a sandbox along a drainage ditch that ran through the quarter. (The land had been a swamp before it was an airbase.)

On weekends, the captains took their families for picnics at Atlantic Beach. Sometimes they went spearfishing and brought home flounder, and handed them around the neighborhood. Or they played tennis with other captains and their wives on the Officers' Club courts. On Saturday nights, they took their wives to dances at the club, if they could find an enlisted woman (the captains called them BAMs, meaning Broad-Assed Marines) to babysit. The children grew brown and browner in the North Carolina sun. Jo, my one-year-old, took her naps in a playpen in the front yard, and her blond hair turned almost white.

It was a comfortable, everyday life, such as a grocer or a dentist might live in any American suburb. Except for one thing: the ground bass of aircraft engines, roaring on takeoff, whispering on landing, rising and falling in the repair shops—sounds so much a part of ordinary life there that wives hanging out their washing, and kids in the sandbox, didn't even look up when a plane flew over, however low.

I was still a pilot on flight orders, entitled to draw flight pay as long as I flew. The assumption was (had been since military flying began) that pilots live more dangerously than, say, infantry officers do. An infantry officer away from the action, the argument went, is in no more danger than a farmer, or a truck driver, or some guy at a desk. But airplanes are always dangerous—you take a chance with your life every time you climb into one, whether you're fighting a war or not. I didn't think the argument was really sound; all life is dangerous. Still, I took the pay and flew.

Of course I did; if you have a fam-

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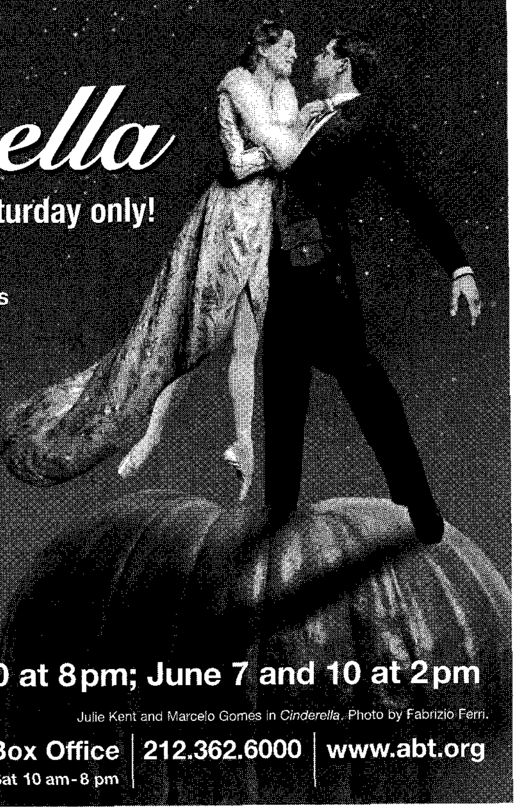

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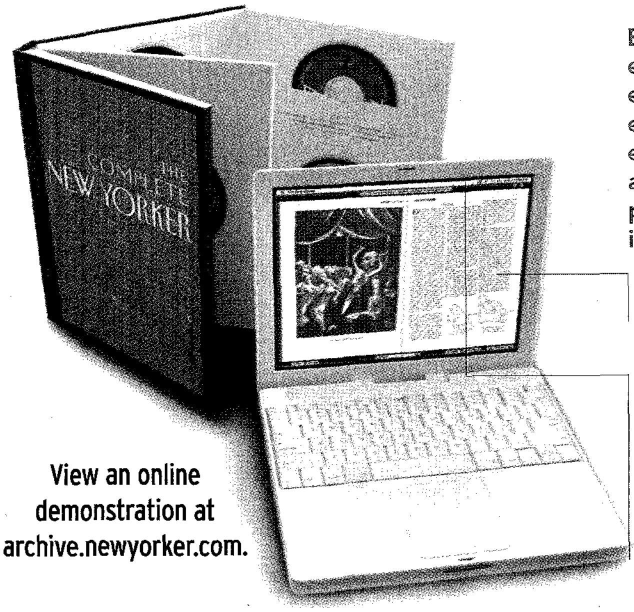

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ily, and you can increase your monthly paycheck just by flying, you fly. But it was more than that. Flying, as I said, is a life. While you're in the air, you inhabit a more fully three-dimensional world than people on the ground can know. The space that's all around you, and especially below you, isolates you; and that perfect isolation is a kind of freedom. So long as the engine runs, the law of gravity has been repealed. And, if gravity's hold is broken, then so, perhaps, is mortality's: while you're flying, you're immortal. Like sex, as I said.

G.C.I.-5 called itself a squadron, but it didn't have any planes. "You want to fly," the sergeant major said, "you got to ask Headquarters Squadron." Headquarters Squadron did the group's paperwork; they were all administrators, accountants, and clerks over there—none of them flew. Nevertheless, they always had a few planes parked on their piece of the flight line, mostly leftovers from the war years—old, tired planes, TBMs and F6Fs, their blue paint peeling and fading. I didn't know where they came from or where they were going—to the junk yard, probably. But while they were there I could fly them, if I asked.

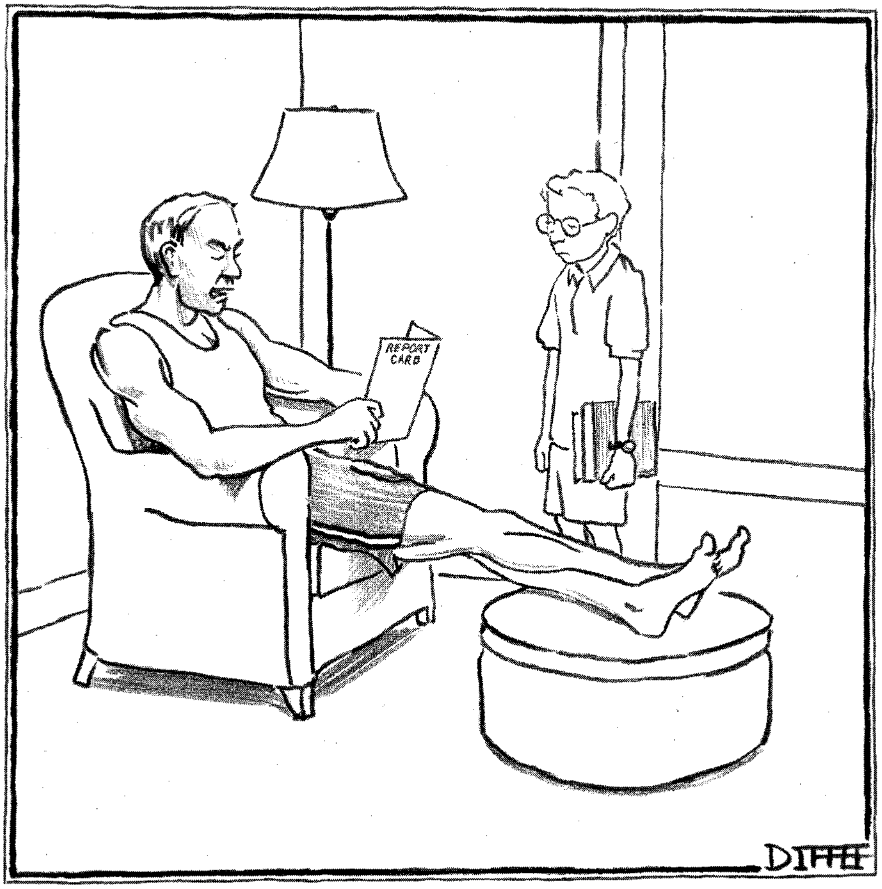
In the summer of 1952, Headquarters Squadron got a Corsair. I'd never flown a Corsair in combat, but after the war, back in Minnesota, I'd joined a reserve squadron—for the money: I had a wife, and only the G.I. Bill for income. And because there was only one Marine squadron at the Minneapolis airport, and Corsairs were what it had, I flew Corsairs.

A Corsair is a big plane for a fighter. From the cockpit, the engine sticks out so far ahead of you (it has two banks of cylinders) that when landing or taking off you can't see anything straight ahead, and have to watch the runway at the sides. An engine that size needs long propeller blades, and in order for the blades to clear the ground when the plane is taxiing the designer bent the wings down from the fuselage and then up—inverted gull wings, they were called—and attached the long, leggy landing gear at the lowest part. The gull wings made the Corsair a beautiful plane in the air—and even on the ground, where most planes are a bit stolid-looking—but wings and engine made it skittish to fly, like a half-broken horse that might decide to throw you any time. Pilots said that you couldn't get a Corsair out of an inverted spin, and it would whip-stall on a landing if you got slow too high over the runway.

I knew the whip-stall story was true; I'd seen it happen, at Yontan, on Okinawa. I was sitting in a TBM just off the active runway, waiting for clearance from the tower to take off, when a Corsair turned into the final approach and levelled off—a little too high, I thought. The pilot cut the power sharply, all the way back, the way you would landing on a carrier. The plane whipped violently over on its back, nose down, and pancaked on the taxiway, sliding upside down, scattering sparks and pieces of airplane. When it stopped moving, everything was quiet. The only sound was the low mutter of my idling engine. Then the fire trucks and an ambulance sounded their sirens in the distance. The tower cleared me to the empty runway, and I took off past the dead airplane.

There wasn't much for a fighter squadron to do, up there over Minnesota. We couldn't practice gunnery or bombing, not above all those farms; all we could do was fly around, in formation or alone. Up there by myself in the empty Minnesota sky, I tried aerobatics—because they're fun to do, but also to prove to myself that I could fly this plane as well as any other. In the first loop I tried, I stalled at the top and went into an inverted spin, falling in wide, flat circles, head down. I tried the standard recovery moves—back on the stick, cross-control ailerons and rudder—but nothing happened. So I just let go. The plane spun on for another rotation, as if to show me who was in charge, and then dropped its nose, gained airspeed, and finished the loop right side up, straight and level. And we went home.

I logged sixty or seventy hours in Corsairs during the year I flew in that reserve squadron, and eventually we came to terms, the plane and I. I gave up trying to



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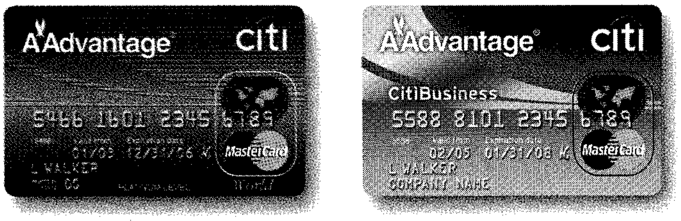

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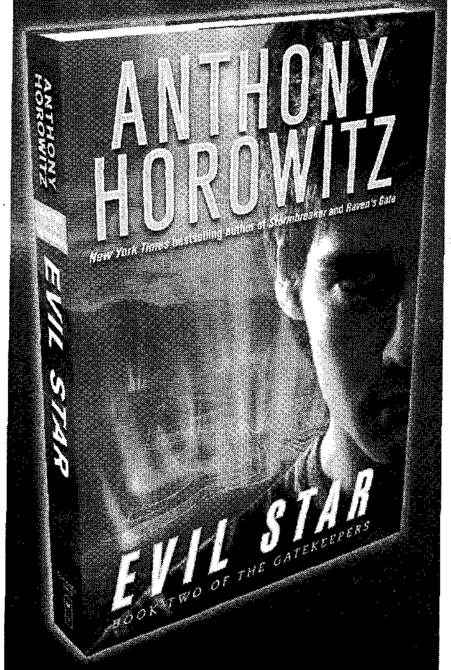
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make it do what I wanted it to, and it stopped trying to scare me. But I wasn't comfortable in Corsairs. I knew they had more power than I had, and stronger wills. It was like dancing with a woman who wants to lead.

Still, when a Corsair appeared on the Headquarters Squadron line, I began flying it. In the fine North Carolina autumn, I'd climb high above the coastline and fly through lazy loops and slow rolls, split-S's and Cuban eights, all the aerobatic stunts I'd learned in flight school, feeling the bright space around me, the air empty and cool, the sunlight like an atmosphere. That kind of flying is play, a game. Not like other games adults play, where the point is in the competition, but like the games of childhood that go on till dark and have no score, no winners or losers.

Now and then, I heard about one of my old friends who was flying in Korea. A regular major, just back from a tour of duty, joined our G.C.I. squadron. He was a good old boy from Arkansas, the kind who says "He was evermore . . ." and calls his sofa a davenette. The major knew some of the pilots I'd flown with.

"Ever know Clyde Holmes?" he asked one day.

I said I'd gone through Pensacola with Clyde. A good guy, I said.

"You know how he come to die?"

I said I didn't know he was dead. What happened?

Well, the good old boy said, he was on a strike up around Pyongyang. Made his bombing run and pulled up and his engine stopped, prop just windmillin'. Ol' Clyde did what you're supposed to do—you know, he was a calm, sensible sort of guy—got all the altitude he could and turned west, toward Korea Bay, and just started glidin'. There's an island offshore there that we hold, just for emergencies—if you can glide that far, you can slide in on the beach. Well, Clyde made the island all right, and glided down to the beach. Plenty of room. But he made a mistake: he put his wheels down. How come he, such a good pilot, to do that?

Maybe he was wounded, I said. Maybe he was flying by instinct, not seeing the sand as sand but as just another runway.

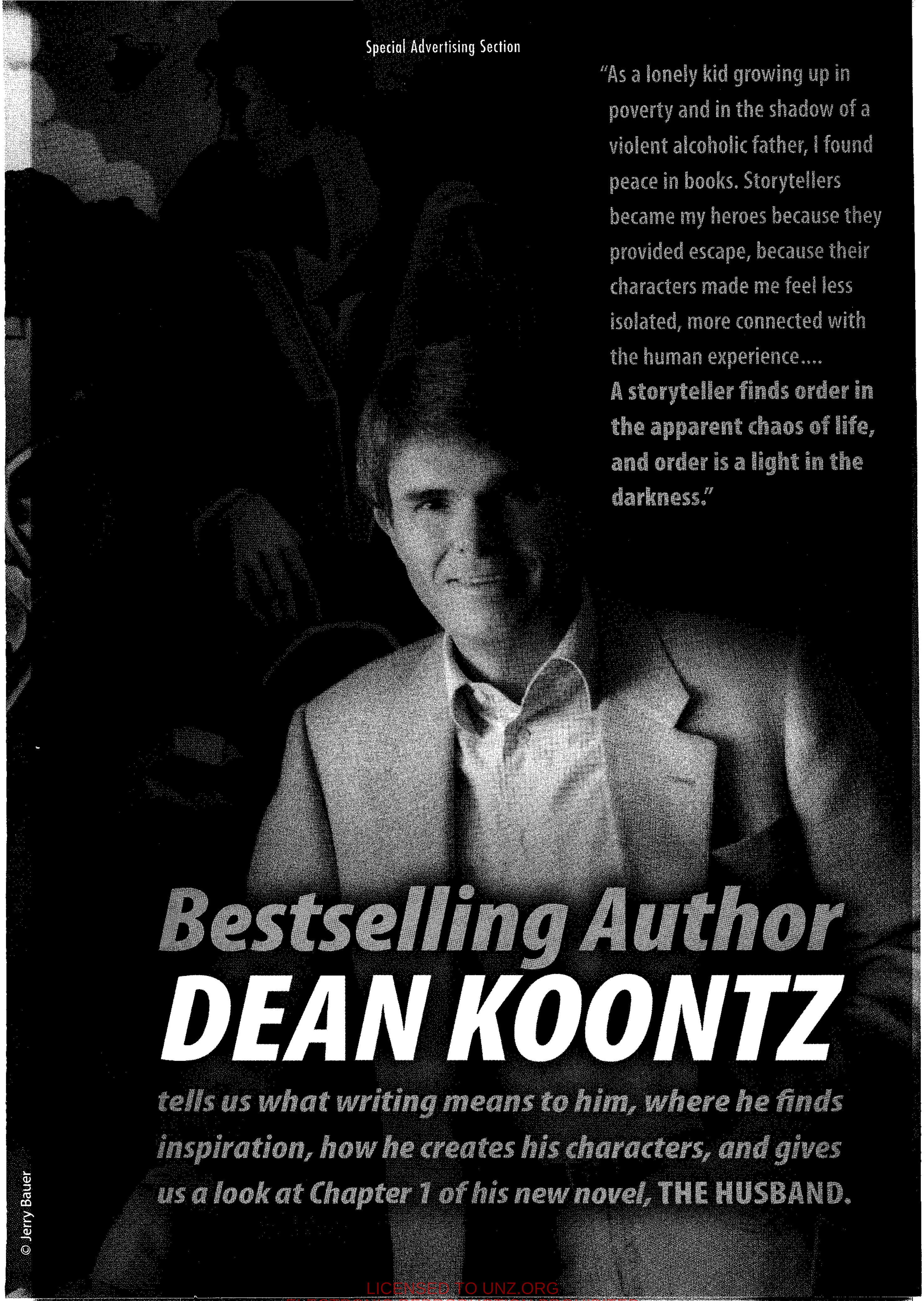
Well, when he touched down his wheels sank in the wet sand—the tide was out—and the plane turned a somersault and settled upside down, with ol' Clyde hangin' by his safety belt, head down, in the closed cockpit. He should have opened it before he landed—that was another mistake.

The emergency crew came and saw what the problem was, and brought the only piece of heavy equipment they had—a cherry picker. But they couldn't get it close enough to the plane—it was so heavy it just sank in the sand. Then they tried to lift the tail with their own muscle, but they sank in, too, and the plane didn't budge. And Clyde just hung there, not moving or saying anything. And slowly the tide came in. And he drowned.

A pilot hears a story like that and thinks, It might have been me, but it wasn't—as though one more accident has been removed from the air world's total store of possible fatalities. It happened to somebody else, so it can't happen to me. Accidents, especially fatal ones, intensify your sense of your own aliveness. That's why pilots read accident reports.

The question we asked ourselves, sitting around the Operations Room when there weren't any night fighters up, was what would become of us, those of us who were pilots as well as air controllers? Some guys said that we'd all be sent to Korea together, as a G.C.I. squadron. Others said no, we weren't that good, we'd be sent as replacements for controllers whose tours of duty had run out. One guy thought that the pilots would go out one at a time, to fighter squadrons that were already out there. Replacements for the dead guys, he said.

The C.O. came into Operations one afternoon—it must have been early September of 1952—looking secretive, conspiratorial, even. That couldn't have been easy for him; he was a big, bluff, loud-talking man. But this time he whispered to us, "We've got our orders." We gath-



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"Everyday heroes are all around us,"

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In his many novels and stories, Mr. Koontz takes his readers on journeys of wonder and intrigue and consistently wins rave reviews from readers as well as critics. Now, in a special interview conducted to celebrate his newest publication, THE HUSBAND, *the writer reveals what inspires him, excites him, and makes him the unique voice he is.*

Q: What is writing to you?

A: Talent is a grace unearned. I'm obligated to polish it to the best of my ability, with respect for the soft voice of intuition. Writing is a *joy*, even during the tenth draft of a page, because a storyteller finds order in the apparent chaos of life, and order is a light in the darkness.

Q: Where do you get your inspiration?

A: Character drives fiction, and I'm inspired by real people who shoulder great burdens without complaint. They're all around us, everyday heroes, but we live in a celebrity-obsessed culture that does not celebrate them.

Q: Is that why you made Mitch Rafferty, the male lead in THE HUSBAND, a landscaper/gardener, a classic Everyman?

A: I didn't consciously make him anything. He walked on stage and told me who he was. Unlike lead characters who are officers of the law, Mitch doesn't have a daily experience with evil to guide him when he encounters it. To me, that makes him interesting when he finds himself and his wife in extreme peril.

Q: You have been called a master of suspense, of language, even of the comic novel, and the London *Times* called you "a literary juggler." How do you describe yourself as a writer?

A: Grateful. After two years as a school teacher, I never again had to get real work! I'm grateful that I've been able to write a wide variety of novels and that readers have supported variety. I have a low boredom threshold and couldn't tolerate writing book after book in one narrow genre. Suspense, however, is always a part of what I do because suspense is the defining quality of our lives: We don't know what will happen to us an hour from now, a day from now. We live in denial of our vulnerability, but suspense is the essence of the human experience.

Q: What aspect of THE HUSBAND gave you the most satisfaction as a writer?

A: When the suspense story, the love story, and the story of a man's emotional/spiritual awakening began twining as tightly as three threads in a cord, with no diminishment of pace, the doubt and anxiety that are always a part of this work abated somewhat. Joy in the process grew. I kissed my wife more. I gave my dog as many belly rubs as she wanted. I occasionally found myself singing as I sat at the computer–singing poorly, but not so poorly that the dog howled.

Q: You've said that books "saved you," as a child. How, and from what?

A: As a lonely kid growing up in poverty and in the shadow of a violent alcoholic father (who was later diagnosed as sociopathic), I found peace in books. Storytellers became my heroes because they provided escape, because their characters made me feel less isolated, more connected with the human experience, and because they brought joy and wonder into my life.

Q: The first thing said about your books is that they're compelling and suspenseful, but perhaps the second is that these stories inspire hope in readers. Are you an incorrigible optimist?

A: I think of myself as a realist. (You're thinking, *Yes, and Donald Duck might think of himself as a serene Zen master. So what?)* Well, I know it's hip to be hopeless, romantic to be alienated and cynical–but what is hip and romantic is not always intelligent or rational. Life can be hard and fate can seem cruel, but happiness is always an option. During a childhood of fear and deprivation, I realized that happiness was still a choice, and I chose it. Whatever happens to my characters–sometimes terrible things–their stories support the contention that life has meaning and that hope is the essential foundation for sanity.

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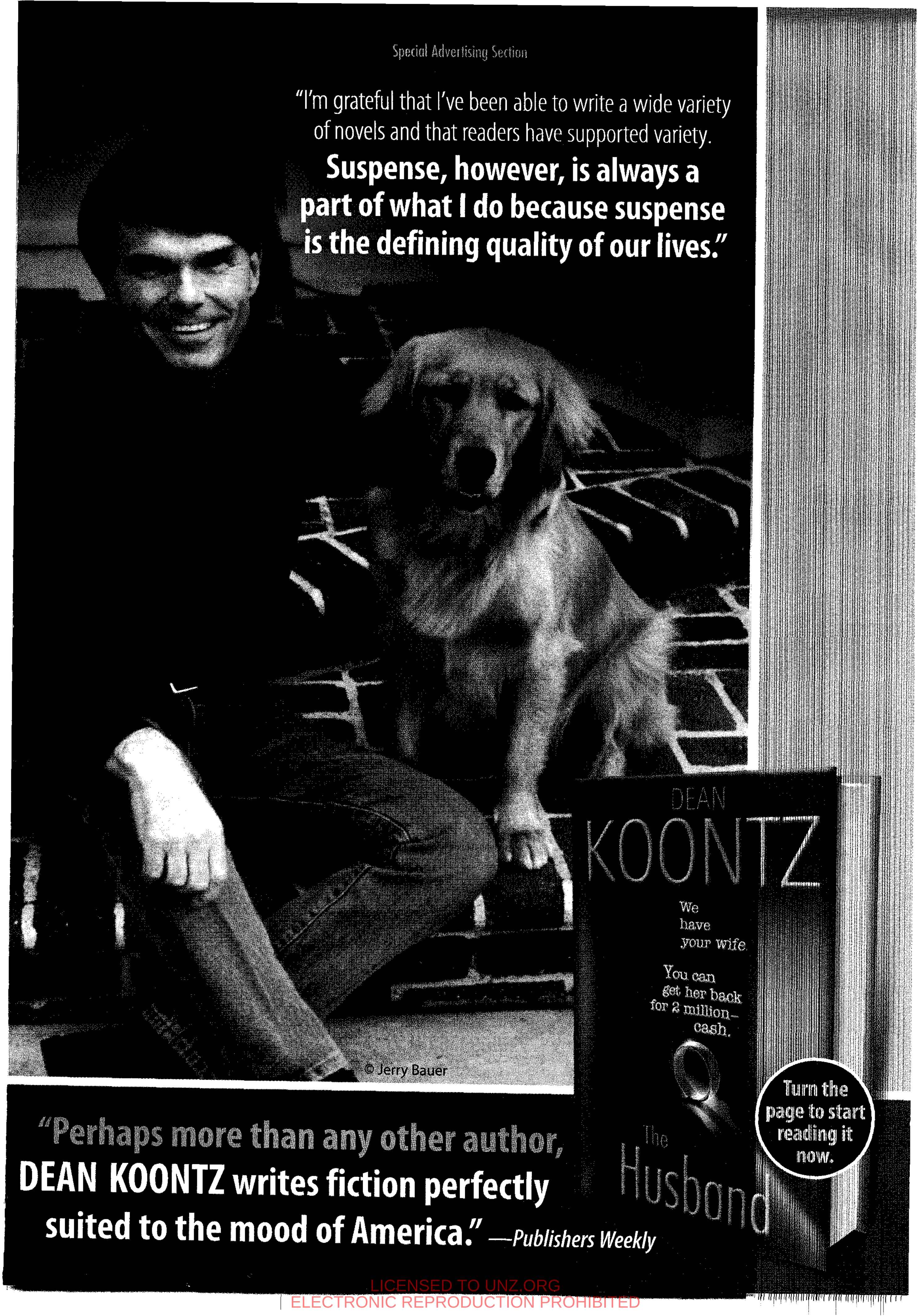
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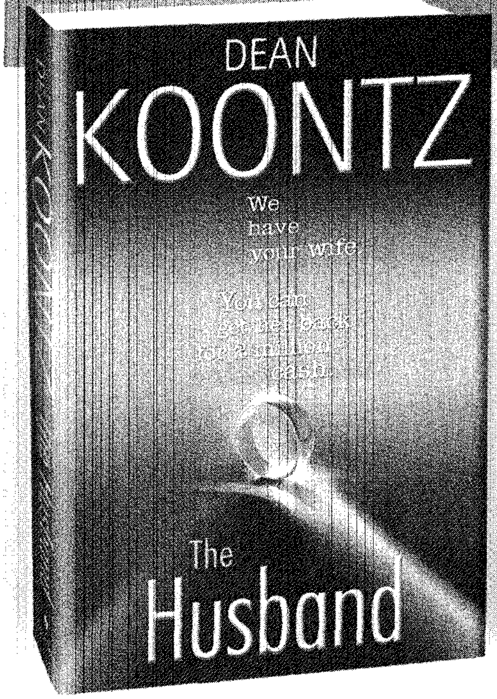

Chapter One

A man begins dying at the moment of his birth. Most people live in denial of Death's patient courtship until, late in life and deep in sickness, they become aware of him sitting bedside.

Eventually, Mitchell Rafferty would be able to cite the minute that he began to recognize the inevitability of his death: Monday, May 14, 11:43 in the morning–three weeks short of his twenty-eighth birthday.

Until then, he had rarely thought of dying. A born optimist, charmed by nature's beauty and amused by humanity, he had no cause or inclination to wonder when and how his mortality would be proven.

When the call came, he was on his knees.

Thirty flats of red and purple impatiens remained to be planted. The flowers produced no fragrance, but the fertile smell of the soil pleased him.

His clients, these particular homeowners, liked saturated colors: red, purple, deep yellow, hot pink. They would not accept white blooms or pastels. Mitch understood them. Raised poor, they had built a successful business by working hard and taking risks. To them, life was intense, and saturated colors reflected the truth of nature's vehemence.

> **When the call came, he was on his knees.**

This apparently ordinary but in fact momentous morning, the California sun was a buttery ball. The sky had a basted sheen.

Pleasantly warm, not searing, the day nevertheless left a greasy sweat on Ignatius Barnes. His brow glistened. His chin dripped.

At work in the same bed of flowers, ten feet from Mitch, Iggy looked boiled. From May until July, his skin responded to the sun not with melanin but with a fierce blush. For one-sixth of the year, before he finally tanned, he appeared to be perpetually embarrassed.

Iggy did not possess an understanding of symmetry and harmony in landscape design, and he couldn't be trusted to trim roses properly. He was a hard worker, however, and good if not intellectually bracing company.

"You hear Ralph Gandhi's gonna sell Rolling Thunder?" Iggy asked.

Rolling Thunder was a surfers' bar.

"I haven't been there in years," Mitch said.

"What–did you find someplace better than Rolling Thunder?"

"Remember coming to my wedding three years ago?" Mitch asked.

"Sure. You had great seafood tacos, but the band was woofy."

"They weren't woofy."

"Man, they had *tambourines*."

"We were on a budget. At least they didn't have an accordion."

"Because playing an accordion exceeded their skill level."

Mitch troweled a cavity in the loose soil. "They didn't have finger bells, either."

Wiping his brow with one forearm, Iggy complained: "I must have Eskimo genes. I break a sweat at fifty degrees."

Mitch said, "I don't do bars anymore. I do marriage. I'd just rather be home than anywhere else."

"Oh, boss, that's sad," said Iggy.

Planting purple impatiens, Mitch said, "It's not sad. It's the best."

"I'm glad you found Holly. She's a great lady. But *I've* got my freedom."

"Good for you, Iggy. And what do you do with it?"

"Anything I want."

"Like, for example?"

"Anything. Like, if I want sausage pizza for dinner, I don't have to ask anyone what *she* wants."

"Radical."

Mitch got to his feet and retrieved three dozen empty plastic plant pots. He carried them to his extended-bed pickup.

The truck stood at the curb, in the shade of an Indian laurel. Although the neighborhood had been built-out only five years earlier, the big tree had already lifted the sidewalk. Eventually the insistent roots would block lawn drains and invade the sewer system.

The developer's decision to save one hundred dollars by not installing a root barrier would produce tens of thousands in repair work for plumbers, landscapers, and concrete contractors.

When Mitch planted an Indian laurel, he always used a root barrier. He didn't need to make future work for himself. Green growing Nature would keep him busy.

The street lay silent, without traffic. Not the barest breath of a breeze stirred the trees.

From a block away, on the farther side of the street, a man and a dog approached.

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The dog, a retriever, spent less time walking than it did sniffing messages left by others of its kind.

The stillness pooled so deep that Mitch almost believed he could hear the panting of the distant canine.

Golden: the sun and the dog, the air and the promise of the day, the beautiful houses behind deep lawns.

Mitch Rafferty could not afford a home in this neighborhood. He was satisfied just to be able to work here.

You could love great art but have no desire to live in a museum.

He noticed a damaged sprinkler head where lawn met sidewalk. He got his tools from the truck and knelt on the grass, taking a break from the impatiens.

His cell phone rang. He unclipped it from his belt, flipped it open. The time was displayed—11:43—but no caller's number showed on the screen. He took the call anyway.

"Big Green," he said, which was the name he'd given his two-man business nine years ago, though he no longer remembered why.

"Mitch, I love you," Holly said.

"Hey, sweetie."

"Whatever happens, I love you."

She cried out in pain. A clatter and crash suggested a struggle.

Alarmed, Mitch rose to his feet. "Holly?"

Some guy said something, some guy who now had the phone. Mitch didn't hear the words because he was focused on the background noise.

Holly squealed. He'd never heard such a sound from her, such fear.

"Whatever happens, I love you."

"Sonofabitch," she said, and was silenced by a sharp crack, as though she'd been slapped.

The stranger on the phone said, "You hear me, Rafferty?"

"Holly? Where's Holly?"

Now the guy was talking away from the phone, not to Mitch:

"Don't be stupid. Stay on the floor."

Another man spoke in the background, his words unclear.

The one with the phone said, "She gets up, *punch* her. You want to lose some teeth, honey?"

She was with two men. One of them had hit her. *Hit* her.

Mitch couldn't get his mind around the situation. Reality suddenly seemed as slippery as the narrative of a nightmare.

"If she's everything to you, then you'll find a way."

Near the house, Iggy planted impatiens. Sweating, red from the sun, as solid as ever.

"That's better, honey. That's a good girl."

Mitch couldn't draw breath. A great weight pressed on his lungs. He tried to speak but couldn't find his voice, didn't know what to say. Here in bright sun, he felt casketed, buried alive.

"We have your wife," said the guy on the phone.

Mitch heard himself ask, "Why?"

"Why do you think, asshole?"

Mitch didn't know why. He didn't want to know. He didn't want to reason through to an answer because every possible answer would be a horror.

"I'm just a gardener."

"So we have your wife. You get her back for two million cash."

Mitch knew it wasn't a joke. If it were a joke, Holly would have to be in on it, but her sense of humor was not cruel.

"You've made a mistake."

"You hear what I said? Two million."

"Man, you aren't listening. I'm a *gardener.*"

"We know."

"I have like eleven thousand bucks in the bank."

"We know."

Brimming with fear and confusion, Mitch had no room for anger. Compelled to clarify, perhaps more for himself than for the caller, he said, "I just run a little two-man operation."

"You've got until midnight Wednesday. Sixty hours. We'll be in touch about the details."

Mitch was sweating. "This is nuts. Where would I get two million bucks?"

"You'll find a way."

The stranger's voice was hard, implacable. In a movie, Death might sound like this.

"It isn't possible," Mitch said.

"You want to hear her scream again?"

"No. Don't."

"Do you love her?"

"Yes."

"Really love her?"

"She's everything to me."

How peculiar, that he should be sweating yet feel so cold.

"If she's everything to you," said the stranger, "then you'll find a way."

"There *isn't* a way."

"If you go to the cops, we'll cut her fingers off one by one, before we kill her."

The stranger spoke without menace, in a matter-of-fact tone, as if he were not making a threat but were instead merely explaining the details of his business model.

Mitchell Rafferty had no experience of such men. He might as well have been talking to a visitor from the far end of the galaxy.

He could not speak because suddenly it seemed that he might so easily, unwittingly say the wrong thing and ensure Holly's death sooner rather than later.

The kidnapper said, "Just so you'll know we're serious . . ."

After a silence, Mitch asked, "What?"

"See that guy across the street?"

Mitch turned and saw a single pedestrian, the man walking the slow dog. They had progressed half a block.

The sunny day had a porcelain glaze. Rifle fire shattered the stillness, and the dogwalker went down, shot in the head.

"Midnight Wednesday," said the man on the phone. "We're damn serious."

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Read the excerpt from bestselling author Dean Koontz's new thriller on the preceding pages to help you solve the Bantam Dell Word Scramble and for a chance to win a signed, first-edition hardcover copy of THE HUSBAND, plus 10 more books for great summer reading (approximate retail value: $125).

To qualify for the **Bantam Dell Word Scramble** contest, fill in the puzzle's blank spaces below (initial letters provide you with a head start). Then unscramble the circled letters found within each answer to reveal the name of Dean Koontz's next hardcover novel coming this fall. Mail the completed puzzle, your unscrambled solution, and your name and address to The New Yorker Merchandising Department, 4 Times Square, 21st floor, New York, NY 10036. Entries must be postmarked by July 31, 2006. A printable version of the puzzle is also available at www. NewYorkerReaderLink.com and can be mailed to the above address. Visit this website again after August 9, 2006, for the puzzle solution. See contest rules below.

WORDS	CLUES
1. T _ ◯ _ _ _	1. Menace
2. H _ _ ◯ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _	2. Simple quieting technique used by kidnapper [3 wds.]
3. E ◯ _ _ _	3. Strangely mysterious
4. H ◯ _ _ _ _ _ _	4. Murder
5. U _ _ _ _ _ ◯ _ _	5. Like the presence of intruders
6. S _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ ◯ _ _ _ _ _ _	6. Foul-play indicators at home [4 wds.]
7. B _ _ ◯ _	7. A hostage might offer one to gain release
8. A _ ◯ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _	8. Like a particularly bitter dispute
9. N _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ ◯	9. Seaside setting in Orange County, CA [2 wds.]
10. D _ _ ◯	10. What protagonist Rafferty fears his wife will be if he can't raise ransom money

WORD SCRAMBLE:

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

→

ANSWER:

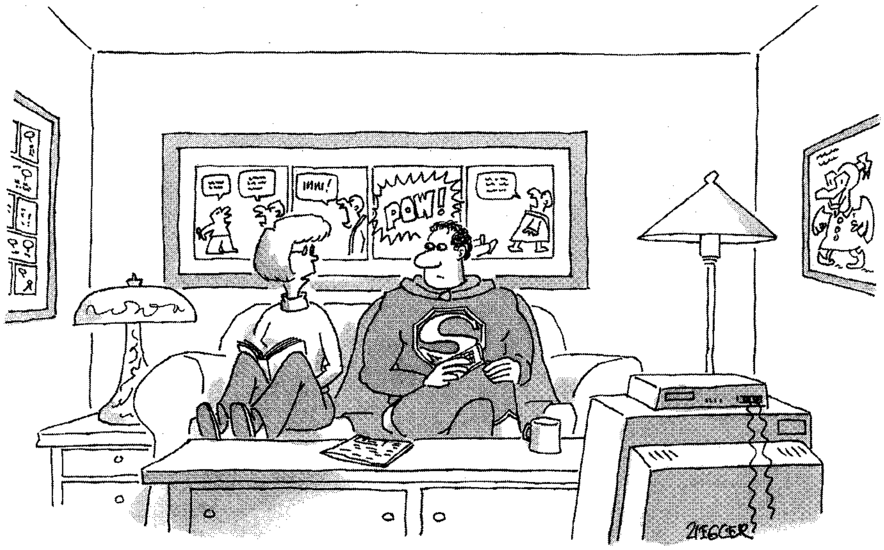
_ _ _ _ _ _ _   _ _ _

Still stumped? Visit www.deankoontz.com for more information.

Bantam Dell Word Scramble Contest Rules and Regulations

NO PURCHASE OR PAYMENT OF ANY KIND IS NECESSARY TO ENTER OR WIN THIS CONTEST. 1. Promotion begins June 5, 2006, at 12:01 a.m. EST and ends July 31, 2006, at 11:59 p.m. EST, when all entries must be postmarked. The puzzle and full rules can be found in the June 12, 2006, issue of The New Yorker magazine or a printable version is available online at www.NewYorkerReaderLink.com. Send the completed puzzle solution to The New Yorker Merchandising Department, 4 Times Square, 21st floor, New York, NY 10036. All entries must be postmarked by July 31, 2006, and received by August 7, 2006. Sponsors are not responsible for lost, late, damaged, illegible, incomplete, incorrect, misdirected, or postage-due mail entries. Only one entry per person/per envelope. Mechanically reproduced entries not eligible. 2. Potential winner will be selected in a random drawing from all correctly completed puzzles by The New Yorker Merchandising Department on or about August 10, 2006, and will be notified by mail and/or telephone. If potential winner cannot be contacted, does not respond within ten (10) days, or the prize or prize notification is returned as undeliverable, such potential winner forfeits all rights to any prize, and an alternate winner may be selected. All decisions of the judges are final and binding in all respects. One (1) grand-prize winner will receive a signed, first-edition hardcover copy of Dean Koontz's novel, THE HUSBAND, plus ten more Bantam Dell books (approximate retail value: $125). 3. Income and other taxes, if any, are the sole responsibility of the winner. 4. All entrants must be 18 or older and legal residents of the 50 United States and the District of Columbia. Employees of The New Yorker magazine, Bantam Dell Publishing Group, and Random House, Inc., ("Sponsors") and their immediate families are not eligible to enter. 5. Subject to all federal, state, and local laws and regulations. Void outside the 50 United States and the District of Columbia, and where prohibited. Any violation of these rules may result in disqualification. Sponsors are not responsible for errors in the administration or fulfillment of this contest, including without limitation mechanical, human, printing, distribution, or production errors, and may modify or cancel this promotion based upon such error at their sole discretion without liability. 6. Odds of winning depend on the number of correctly completed puzzles received. Prize not transferable. No substitutions for prize except by Sponsor in which case a prize of equal or greater value will be substituted. 7. All entries become the property of Sponsors and will not be acknowledged or returned. By providing your name, address, and/or e-mail address, you grant Sponsors the right to send you commercial messages and share your address with others, unless specified otherwise as indicated on the entry form. 8. Except where prohibited: (i) acceptance of prize constitutes consent to use winner's name, likeness, and winning entry for editorial, advertising, and publicity purposes, without further compensation; (ii) potential winner may be required to sign an affidavit of eligibility (including social security number) and liability/publicity release. Affidavits and releases must be returned within ten (10) days of attempted notification or an alternate winner may be chosen. 9. For the name of the winner or to notify Sponsors that you wish to be excluded from all lists of names and addresses used by Sponsors for future contests or sweepstakes, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to "Bantam Dell Word Scramble," The New Yorker Merchandising Department, 4 Times Square, 21st floor, New York, NY 10036 after August 10, 2006, but before January 1, 2007. The Sponsors of this contest are The New Yorker, 4 Times Square, 21st floor, New York, NY 10036 and Bantam Dell Publishing Group, a division of Random House, Inc., 1745 Broadway, New York, NY 10019.

Bantam www.deankoontz.com



"The next time we redecorate, how about if I choose the art?"

• •

ered around him, and for a minute he said nothing, savoring the moment. Then he said, "Italy! We're going to Italy!" He waved a handful of papers and began to read from the top one: "When ordered, you will proceed to Udine, Italy." He paused. "We'll be defending the Italians."

I went home and ordered the necessary books: an Italian-English dictionary, "Learning Italian," and a phrase book. My kids would grow up speaking Italian while the squadron watched for Russian planes from the other side of the mountains. The orders set no date for the move; still, they existed.

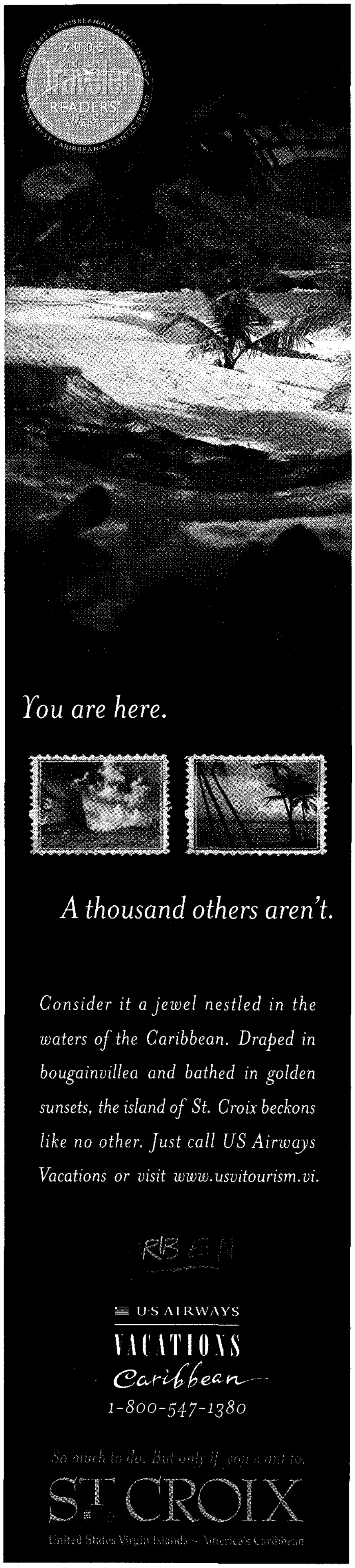
Then November came, and Dwight Eisenhower was elected President. Our orders were cancelled and put at the back of the file. We went on training, bored now after the excitement of the Italian caper had drained away.

That winter, Headquarters Squadron picked up a twin-engine Beechcraft. It wasn't any bigger than a Corsair, and weighed less, but it had room for a pilot, a co-pilot, and five or six passengers—like a small van or a big station wagon.

The Operations Officer, a guy I'll call Buck, saw the twin-Beech as a way to get out of North Carolina. He explained his plan to me during a slow spell in Operations one night. He was a qualified instrument instructor, he said; and I, though I was good enough on instruments, didn't have a standard multi-engine ticket. Well, he'd teach me, and we'd make some trips, for practice, you know—New York! Chicago! Miami! Why not? He made the cities sound exotic, like places he'd never been to and had always wanted to see.

Here's how you practice instrument flying in a cabin plane. First, you obscure the windows with green shades; then you put on a pair of amber-colored goggles. With the goggles on, you can't see out of the cabin, even on a sunny day. (Pilots call this "going under the hood.") All you can see are the dials and gauges in front of you—altimeter, airspeed, turn-and-bank, artificial horizon, compass, rate-of-climb. Together, these instruments will tell you everything you need to know to fly the plane. The problem is, you have to believe what they tell you, and that can be difficult when your body is telling you something different. The seat-of-your-pants says you're flying straight and level, but the turn-and-bank says you're in a steep turn. Trust the gauge. (The instructor beside you isn't wearing amber goggles; he can see the earth and the sky and the plane that's coming at you. He'll keep you out of serious trouble.)

Blinded to the outside world that way, I flew the twin-Beech up and down the East Coast: to Anacostia and Willow Grove, and then farther—up to Floyd Bennett Field, on Long Island, and down to Jacksonville and back, while Buck dozed in the co-pilot's seat, or talked about what he expected from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New York, what Chicago might be like.

I didn't expect either beauty or excitement from those twin-Beech flights, but there was both. The beauty came when we flew at night, using not the glasses and shades but the night itself as the hood. It was always the same:

After supper, I say good night to Liz and the girls, and drive to the field. The twin-Beech waits on the tarmac. We ground-check, start the engines, and taxi slowly to the active runway, into takeoff position. I open the throttle and begin to roll, watching the two rows of runway lights that seem to merge in the distance, staying between them, accelerating. The tail lifts, then the nose, and we're off the ground, and the black profile of trees at the end of the strip is moving toward us, and under us.

As we climb, the dark world opens. Sunset still stains the west with its last light, the zenith is palest blue, almost colorless, the east is black and empty. We pass over the little shore towns, Beaufort and Morehead City. Along the beach, the surf is a luminous scrawl on the darkness of the sea, and now it's night, even up here. The stars surround us.

The soft glow of the instrument panel doesn't light the cockpit—I can barely see Buck's face, and the space around and behind us is shadowy dark—but it gives the little room we ride in a companionable warmth. Below us, lights begin to come on in solitary houses scattered over the dark land. Like the stars, they don't illuminate the night; they only punctuate it. Here and there, an airport tower blinks its green identification letters into the night, saying comfortingly, You're all right, here's Charleston right where it ought to be. And then JAX, here's Jacksonville, and we land and park and drink coffee in the bright airport lounge, and go back into the night and north, until we see the green signal for Cherry Point (*dash-dot, dash-dot-dash, dash*—NKT), and we're back. We glide down out of the night and land between the lights. And go on home, where wives and children are sleeping as though we had never left.

For excitement, there is the final instrument check—a trip to Chicago, Buck says, under the hood the whole damn way. We could take some of the guys. If we leave on a Friday, stop partway, and finish the flight early Saturday, we can stay in Chicago till Sunday. (That was the rule: if you took a plane for a weekend, you had to fly it every day.) "We could stop at Marion, Ohio," the Radar Officer says. "That's my home town. It's halfway to Chicago. Warren Gamaliel Harding lived in Marion," he adds, as though that were an inducement to land there.

It's spring in North Carolina when we take off in the twin-Beech late one Friday afternoon, and I go under the hood. The first leg is an easy flight on instruments, the air smooth, the radio beacons all in the right places. We pass over the Blue Ridge, and down into Ohio as darkness comes on.

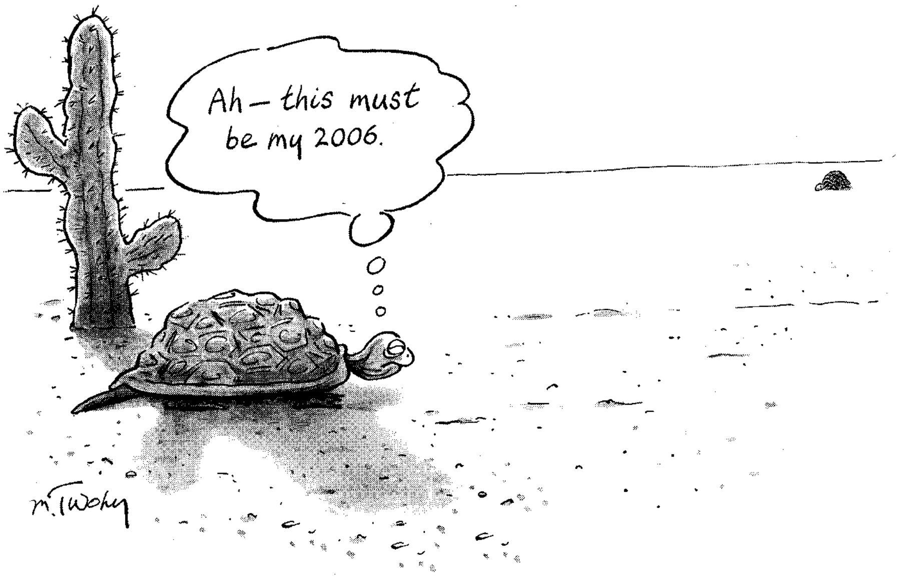
The rules say that we can't leave Marion until after midnight. We stand around in the airport building, under a larger-than-life portrait of President Harding, wondering what to do. The Radar Officer says there's a pretty good restaurant in town. With a bar. Might as well wait there.

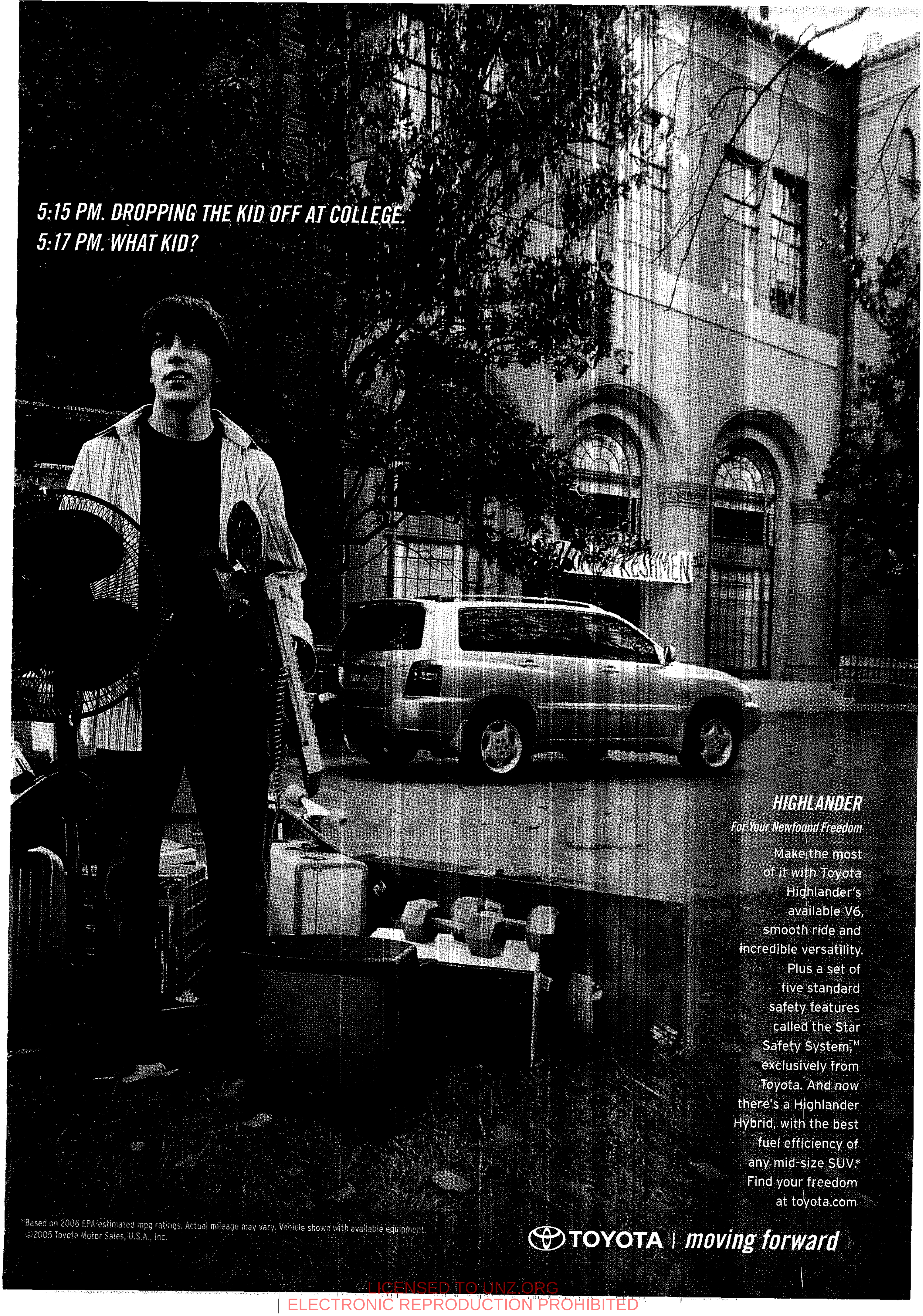
We have dinner, and a few drinks. Time passes slowly. We have a few more drinks. At midnight, when we head back for the airport, we are all more or less drunk, both those of us who can fly—Buck, me, and a captain from Texas—and those who have just come along for the ride. In the airport waiting room, we discuss who should be first pilot. The least drunk one, surely, but which one is that? I say I am, and, besides, it's my instrument-check ride, so I should fly. Buck agrees. He says he's next least drunk, so he'll be co-pilot. The Texan doesn't seem to mind, as long as we let him sleep.

The weather has changed. A wind has come up out of the west; even in the dark we can see storm clouds rolling in close to the ground. Meteorology says that a front is passing over Chicago: there's some snow there. We'd better wait awhile. We sit around the waiting room, dozing, until after four. By then, Chicago weather is flyable, meteorology says; not good—overcast and still blowing hard—but possible. It's going to be a rough ride. "No point in goin' under the hood," Buck says. "You won't see anything anyway."

I take off and am at once in cloud, the plane tossing and tilting. Up in the overcast, it's still snowing, flakes streaming out of the darkness, striking the windshield wetly and running off. I watch the wings for signs of icing, push the yoke forward and head down into warmer air, and am in rain. I check in over the Goshen beacon in Indiana (the controller has a Midwestern accent, like mine), and fly on, still in cloud, out across the tip of Lake Michigan, invisible below, to the next beacon, at Harvey, a town south of Chicago. I didn't expect that. My parents live in Harvey; they must be asleep down there. Or maybe they aren't; maybe they hear, sleepily, the sound of a plane above them, and wonder who'd be fool enough to be up there on a night like this.

As I turn north toward Glenview Naval Air Station, the only sign of day is a slight graying inside the overcast.


Ah – this must be my 2006.
M. Twohy


5:15 PM. DROPPING THE KID OFF AT COLLEGE.
5:17 PM. WHAT KID?
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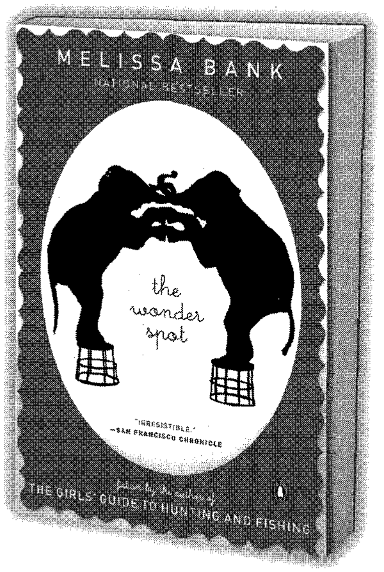
"What Austen did for marriage, Melissa Bank does for serial monogamy."
—Zadie Smith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I begin to let down, reaching for the cloud base, and come out suddenly, and see the Glenview runway ahead. Or part of it. At seven o'clock on a snowy Saturday morning, there's likely only one ground crewman on duty. He has got the snowplow out and plowed one path the length of the main runway and wide enough, barely, for a plane, and has piled the plowed snow on either side, higher than a plane's wingtips. If I don't land exactly straight down that wet black strip, we'll end up in a drift. In the half-light, in the bucking wind, I work the plane down into the final approach, touch down, and roll—straight enough—and turn off toward the hangars. I feel perfectly sober.

Buck hasn't been saying anything—he must be asleep—but he stirs as we taxi in, and opens his eyes. "Well," he says, "I reckon you passed your instrument check."

When the other captains of Kimes Street came home after work, they ate supper, played with their kids, maybe went to a movie. At No. 12 it was different: if I wasn't going out on a night flight, that was the time when I entered my other life, the one I'd left behind when I went back to flying. After the supper dishes were cleared and the girls were put to bed, I got out the Olivetti, put the works of Thomas Hardy on the dining-room windowsill, and wrote "The Pattern of Hardy's Poetry." I figured if I wrote a couple of pages every night I'd have enough by the time I finished my hitch in the Marines to call it a dissertation and submit it to my professors. I worried, though, that I wasn't doing it right. I had plenty of ideas, but I didn't have many footnotes, and there were no libraries around where I could look things up: not at the base, certainly, not in Havelock, or up the road in New Bern, not anywhere I could get to.

Once I could fly the twin-Beech day or night, in any kind of weather, I saw that I could do something about the footnote problem. I'd organize a visit to Oak Ridge, up by Knoxville. The air controllers in the squadron would see what big-time radar—the kind that was supposed to protect the whole country—looked like. And I'd skin out to the University of Tennessee library and work on Hardy.

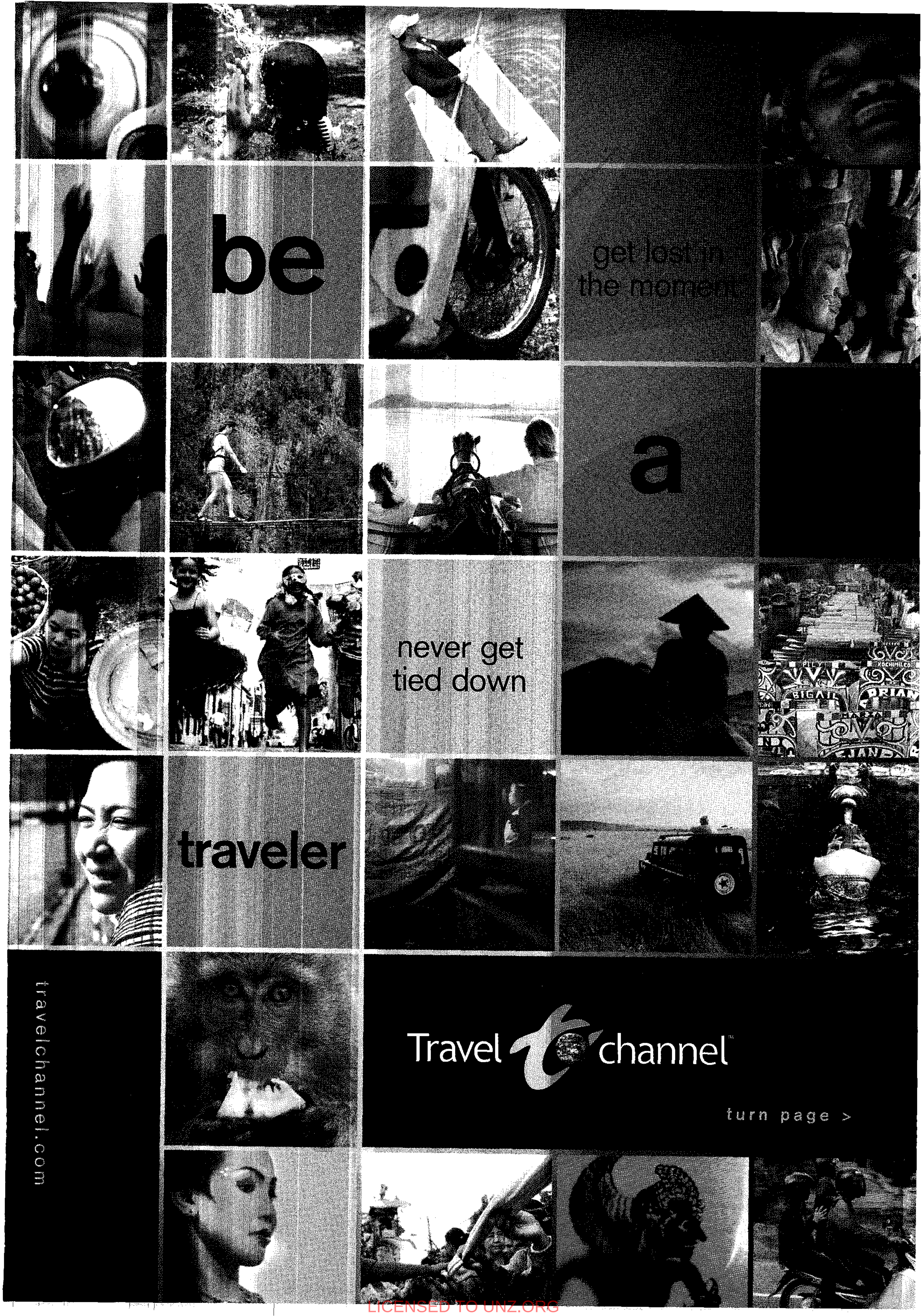
One morning I flew a planeload of controllers into the Knoxville airport, and we drove out to the mountain where the radar control center was. Entering the place was like going down an enormous rabbit hole in the side of a hill. Farther in was a sort of cave full of radar scopes and Plexiglas charting boards. In the dim blue light, shadowy figures moved quietly, whispering and making marks on the charting boards with fluorescent pencils.

The safety of our nation was there in the hands of those drifting shadows. The marks on the boards were possible enemies, planes with atomic bombs aboard, or maybe missiles. It should have been impressive. But it wasn't; it was all pretend, like one of the Buck Rogers movies I used to watch on Saturday afternoons back home. It would never happen. And, anyway, it had nothing to do with the kind of small-scale, one-target-at-a-time war we were training for at G.C.I.-5. I slipped away as soon as I could, went back into Knoxville, and spent the afternoon in the university library happily looking up stuff about Hardy and carefully writing it down.

If I could write about Hardy, I started thinking, why couldn't I write about somebody else? My hitch with the Marines would be over in the fall of '53. Why not go to London and write a book? No, not write a book—edit one. T. E. Hulme was a philosopher-poet who'd been killed in the First World War. His book, "Speculations," was supposed to be important—T. S. Eliot said it was. Why not dig up Hulme's other writings, the essays and reviews he'd written that had never been collected, and put them in a book? Call it "Further Speculations." Then I'd be a published scholar! I applied for another Fulbright.

That spring, I heard that I'd got the Fulbright. By accepting it, I'd be promising to go to London and edit a book of Hulme's writings. That worried me. How do you edit a book? For that matter, how do you take a wife and two little girls all the way to London and find a place for them to live and feed them for a year on sixteen hundred and eighty pounds? But of course I took it.

I didn't really know much about Hulme. I could think of only one person in the United States who might be able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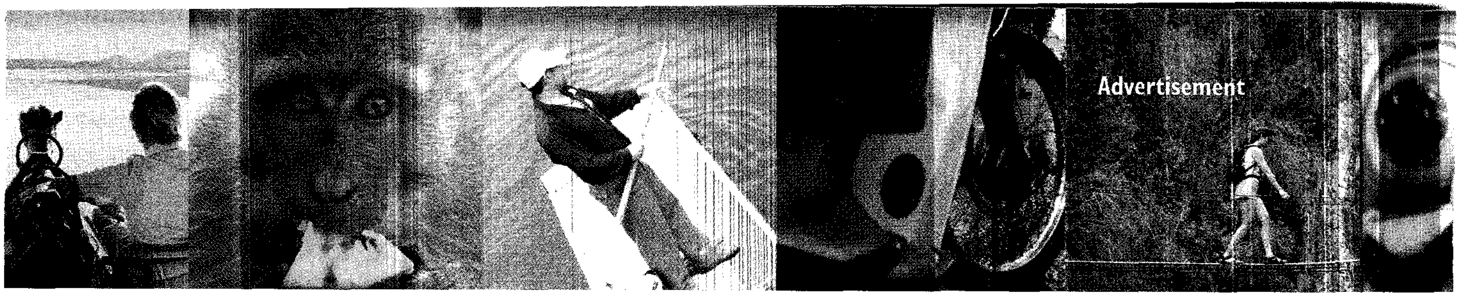


Travel channel

be a cruciverbalist.

Cruciverbalists can be anyone who enjoys crossword puzzles. This one happens to be loaded with clues inspired by the Travel Channel, so don't expect the usual answers. Think about where you've gone, why you went, and what you did. Like those experiences, the answers will be off the beaten path. Grab a pen and be a cruciverbalist. But most of all, **Be a Traveler**.

A printable version of this puzzle is available at www.NewYorkerReaderLink.com. Visit this website again after August 1, 2006, for the puzzle's solution.

ACROSS

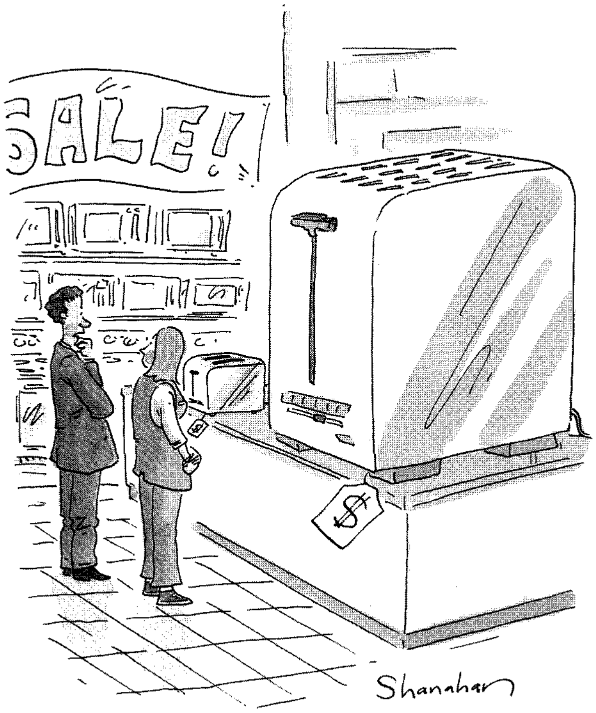
1. Pacific _ (Travel Journalists on “5 Takes” will visit 12 cities there)
4. Ukraine, former Soviet _ nation
8. Foreign _ (Step off the plane onto it and begin your adventure!)
12. The Land Down Under, ___ Australia (“5 Takes” destination)
13. “Isn't that __ bit off on his calls?” asked one soccer fan of another.
14. Wharf
15. Food _ (Culinary celebration often featured on “Taste of America with Mark DeCarlo”)
17. Museum's large vases
18. South Pacific island painted by Gauguin
19. Nickname of president who headed Normandy Invasion
21. _ and don'ts (Travel tips, perhaps)
22. Illegally hunt safari animals
25. Forest of _ (From Shakespeare's “As You Like It”)
28. Astrolabe-like instrument used in ancient Egypt
30. Can. city where the Argos play
31. “Fee! _! Foe! Fum! I smell the blood of an Englishman.”
32. Belonging to the Crater Lake National Park state, for short
33. La Scala conductor
36. In Hong Kong, it's acceptable to _ noodles
38. Haida _/Queen Charlotte Islands, British Columbia
39. Earthy prefix
40. Traveler's home base, briefly
41. Northern Lights = _ Borealis
45. “_ Cusack's Local Flavor” (New Travel Channel show where the actress fills her plate in Europe with rich helpings of food and culture)

1	2	3	■	4	5	6	7	■	8	9	10	11
12			■	13				■	14			
15			16					■	17			
18						■	19	20		■	■	■
■	■	■	21			■	22			23	24	■
25	26	27			■	28						29
30			■	■	31			■	■	32		
33			34	35			■	36	37			
■	38					■	39			■	■	■
■	■	■	40			■	41			42	43	44
45	46	47		■	48	49						
50				■	51				■	52		
53				■	54				■	55		

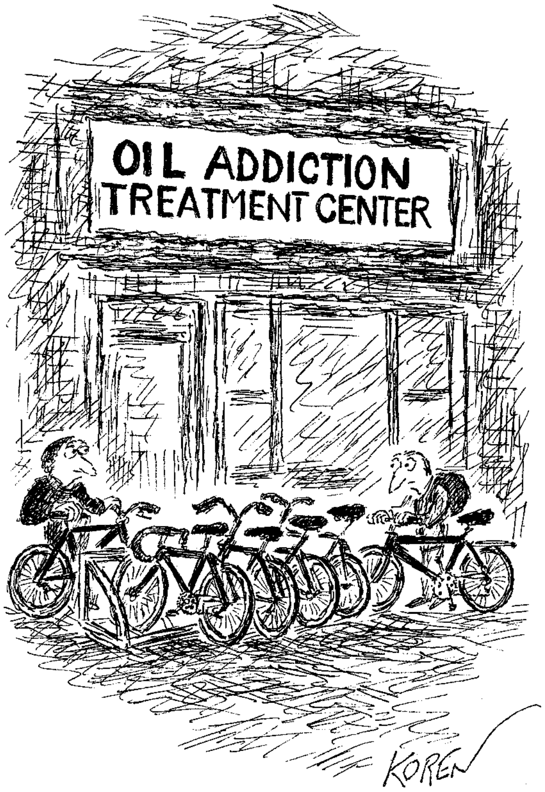
48. “Anthony _: No Reservations”
50. Jamaican citrus fruit
51. Norse mythology source
52. Used to blast a tunnel through a mountain
53. “Tribal _” (Travel Channel's in-depth experience of Vanuatu village)
54. “And you would have seen the funny stuff that got cut from the final _ of the show.” (From Mark DeCarlo's “Letters from the Road”)
55. Jet _ (Beach recreation)

DOWN

1. Grand Canyon rapids boat (Travel Channel celebrates National Parks Week)
2. Swedish furniture giant
3. Bangers and _ (Pub grub)
4. Native of England, Scotland, or Wales
5. Mr. Strauss made them for miners during California's Gold Rush
6. Chance __ lifetime (Unique travel opportunity)
7. Delicacy, gelatinous stuff from turtle's shell
8. Bubble and _ (Traditional English dish)
9. “O Canada! _ home and native land!” (Sung at a Blue Jays game)
10. _ Wright, Justine Shapiro, and Megan McCormick (Travelers on “Globe Trekker”)
11. Fleur-de-_ (Symbol on Québec's flag)
16. Sandcastle's swoosher
20. Asian team qualified for 2006 World Cup, briefly
23. Ancient Chinese dynasty
24. Mister in Germany (Where comedian at 27-Down will share his experiences)
25. 24-hr. banker
26. Loch _, site of the Callanish Stones
27. “_ Carey's World Cup” (Four-part Travel Channel show premiering June 15th)
28. Opera classic: “O Sole _”
29. Cooking-class measurement (abbrev.)
31. Disk tossed at beach or park
34. Sandwich, informally, to a 4-Down
35. Even score
36. “The Seine seen from La Grande Jatte” Pointillist painter
37. Hindu god _ Muruga (Gastronomic hedonist at 48-Across visited his festival in Malaysia)
39. Famous Spanish architect
42. Haggis ingredient
43. Central Park's Wollman _
44. Fisher Space _-Gravity 7 Pen (Featured on “John Ratzenberger's Made in America”)
45. Peak travel mo.
46. Q. “Who is the god of love and beauty in Irish mythology?” A. “Angus _, _ believe.”
47. “Great” king of Wessex, for short
49. Curious, like a unique archaeological find


SALE!
$
Shanahan

"I suppose I could live with two slices at a time."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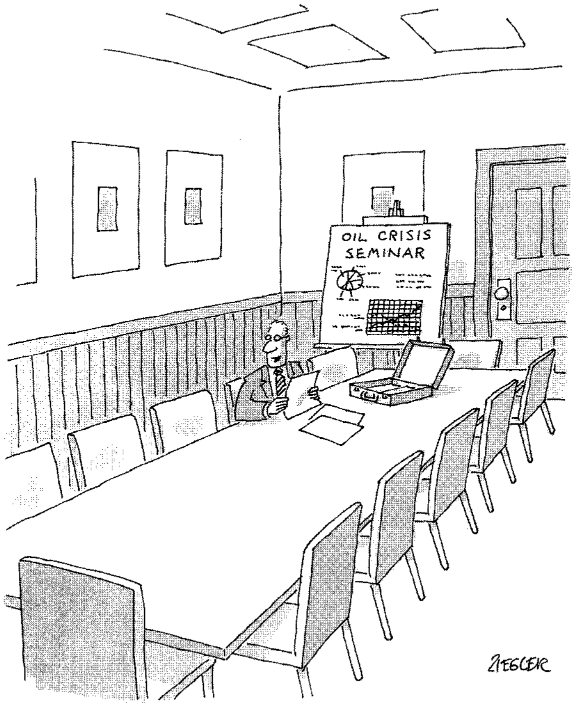
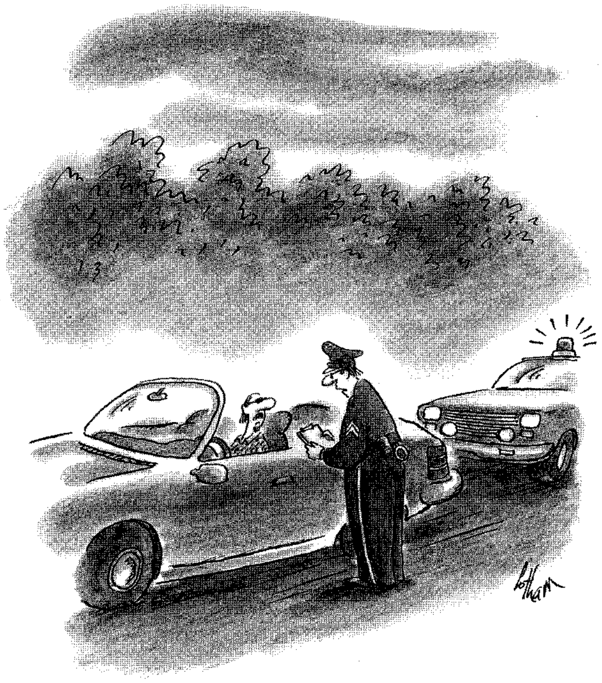

OIL CRISIS
SEMINAR
ZIEGLER

"I see that I appear to be the only one at this meeting. Well, that's a real energy saver right there."



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HERE

to tell me more: Ezra Pound. He'd been in London when Hulme was there; he'd written for the papers Hulme wrote for, he'd been at the same parties, he knew the same writers and artists. But Pound was in a mental hospital up in Washington. There'd been a lot about him in the papers when he was given the Bollingen Prize for Poetry, a few years back. Pound had lived in Italy during the war. He'd broadcast for Mussolini. That was treason: he could have been shot. But you can't shoot a great poet. So they declared him mentally unfit to stand trial and put him away in a place called St. Elizabeth's. I could write to him. Maybe I could even see him.

I wrote, asking for an interview, and Pound agreed to see me. That's why, on that August morning in 1953, I was flying into Anacostia, nervously, looking all around for Air Force bombers and Eastern airliners, and especially for Bolivians.

I'd never been in an insane asylum before. It looked pleasant enough, more like a small college than a hospital—old red brick buildings with clock towers and cupolas, on a green hill overlooking Anacostia and the Potomac. I could see the airstrip down below.

Inside, it was like any old institution: shadowy, low-ceilinged corridors, cream-colored walls, lots of dark closed doors. In the main building, I told the receptionist that I'd come to see Mr. Pound. She didn't seem surprised at another visitor. He's out on the lawn, she said. That way.

Three people sat together under trees on the far side of the lawn: an old man sunk in a deck chair, a woman seated behind him, and, on the grass at the old man's feet, a young man, looking up. Like a king on his throne, I thought, with his consort behind him and the court jester at his feet. And I a courtier, come to ask favors.

Pound was dressed in an open-necked shirt, floppy pants, sandals, and a broad-brimmed straw hat, as though he were still in Italy. The body in the loose clothes was lean; hardship had stripped him of all unnecessary flesh. His face was thin and pale, and more furrowed than any I'd ever seen: a wrinkle wherever there could be a wrinkle. A worn-out face. His beard was grizzled, an old man's beard, thin and straggling and untended-looking. Only the eyes weren't old or worn out; they peered sharply out of deep, dark sockets. The eyes of a man who watched, and judged everything. Distrustful eyes, doubting the world.

Mrs. Pound was a prim-looking woman, like a schoolteacher or a housekeeper. Her gray hair was drawn neatly back in a bun, and her face was colorless, expressionless. She sat quietly, her hands folded in her lap and her feet tucked under her chair, as though this afternoon watch on the lawn were a protective duty.

The young man on the grass was a disciple. Five minutes after I left I couldn't have described him. He said nothing.

There were no introductions. Pound simply began speaking, as though I'd come into the middle of a conversation—or, more precisely, an explanation. (Gertrude Stein had once called him a Village Explainer. All right if you're a village, she'd said, but, if not, not.) "Hulme," he said, "was the outward image of a Yorkshire farmer—the Pickwickian Englishman who starts a club." He paused. "If anyone can read 'Pickwick.' " What Hulme had, he said, was solidity, honesty—a determination to get at the facts. He never dodged fact, never kidded himself. Even Santayana wasn't so free of bunkum. "Bunkum" surprised me: I hadn't expected Pound to speak twanging American slang, and dated slang at that. I shouldn't have been surprised; the language and the twang were part of him, the role he played of American Sage, descended in a direct line from Walt Whitman.

While Pound talked, silent figures drifted across the lawn behind him, sometimes pausing to stare at our little circle. Pound waved his hand dismissively, as though they were simply some of life's annoying creatures, like gnats and pigeons. "Pay no attention to them," he said. "They're all mad." And he went on talking.

He remembered something that Hulme had said: "All a man ever really thinks would go on a half sheet of notepaper. The rest is just elaboration." Pound seemed to like the idea that a man might spend his life trying to get the ideas on that half sheet of paper ex-

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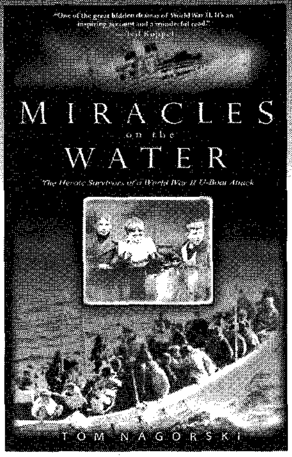

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"I assume that's a no?"

• •

actly right, to get to the truth of a problem, get the facts straight. When he talked this way, he seemed to be talking about his own life and work—not the poetry but the truth, the facts. Hulme, he said, was a man who didn't kid himself; that, too, I thought, is part of Pound's self as he sees it.

I asked him about Hulme's life in Edwardian London, and Pound began to gossip. It was Edwardian gossip, forty years old, but gossip still. How Hulme had helped start the Poets' Club in the Tour d'Eiffel restaurant in Fitzrovia, and how he was politicked out of the club by a second-rater named Simpson. (I'd never heard of Simpson, but I wrote the name down.) About Hulme's mistress, Mrs. Kibblewhite, who lived in the former Venetian Embassy in Soho Square. Pound didn't think Hulme discussed ideas with her: he was very Victorian in his attitudes toward women, Pound said; wanted them for his pleasure, and no nonsense.

"He was a bully," Mrs. Pound said suddenly. "Aggressive." Pound said, impatiently, yes, Hulme was a bully, in the sense that he had no sympathy for muddled thinkers; he wanted to bully them straight. I wondered if that category included Mrs. Pound.

As he talked, Pound re-created his London before the war, and populated it with ghosts. Were any of them still around, forty years later? When he saw me noting down names, he said, "Don't scribble them down. Give me your address and I'll send you the important ones." I took that as a dismissal. I gave Pound my address at Cherry Point, and left. At the corner of the main hospital building, I turned and waved. But Pound didn't notice me; he was already bent toward the disciple at his feet, explaining something.

As I rode back down the hill toward the airfield I thought about the old man up there in the madhouse. Everything he had said was plausible—dogmatic, maybe, but plausible. Only once his mind had seemed to jerk away from what we were talking about, when suddenly his eyes shifted off into vacancy and he said, a little wistfully, "Edward the Eighth was forced to abdicate, because he admired Hitler!" And then he was back in Edwardian London. He might have been right about the King—how would I know?

Pound was a man who believed in himself too much, I thought, a man who had too many ideas and gripped them too tightly in his mind. But not crazy. He shouldn't be there.

My logbook entry for the trip back from Anacostia is written in red ink, meaning that it was night flying; but at altitude it was sunset all the way. Ten thousand feet is the place for watching sunsets: purple-black bands of clouds and, in between, all colors: flame red nearest the sun, but also lemon yellow, pale green, all changing as you fly.

Pound's letter arrived two days later; he must have gone straight from our meeting to his typewriter. It was a strange, headlong-looking letter. I'd never seen one like it. Pound had typed it with various degrees of indention and spacing, none of which seemed to have any particular significance, and had used the slash as a punctuation mark. The sentences were fragmentary and abrupt, the spelling whimsical. It was, I decided, what the stream of consciousness looks like, when ideas and recollections are coming too fast to sort out and tidy up.

"Hynes/for London," it said at the top: no conventional salutation, no polite pretense that I was "Dear" Anybody. What he sent me was, first of all, names and addresses. Some of these had to do with Hulme—more Edwardians he'd thought of, sometimes with addresses in London, France, or America. Others were, as he put it, "for yr/mental life." These latter were disciples, I decided, like the one who had sat at Pound's feet on the hospital lawn. If I called on one, he'd introduce me to others, as in a secret society or a religious cult. I decided to skip them.

Pound's advice was of two kinds. One kind told me how to write a book about Hulme, Pound's way:

> If yu do sort of Ring and the Book / what
> T.E.H. looked like to divers persons hostile
> and the reverse /
> not taking any as
> absolutely perspicacious.

The other kind of advice concerned individuals and how to deal with them. The poet Edward Storer, for instance: "not resentful. known to some as 'custard.' No jagged edges. in fact yu better find him, he wd/enjoy being FOUND."

There were many judgments: a poet named Baerlein was a "cackling nuisance"; the sculptor Jacob Epstein was described as "very important," which was then taken back: "I don't mean that THEY are important, but that his pen portraits shd/be taken count of/." It was all a bit like reading a page of his

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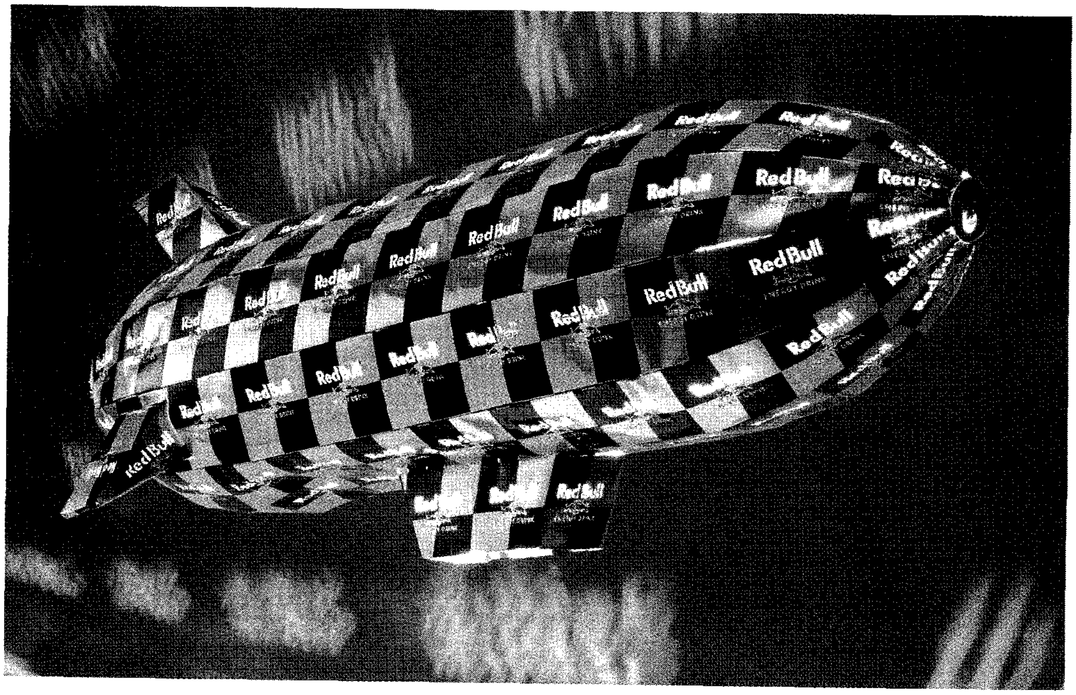

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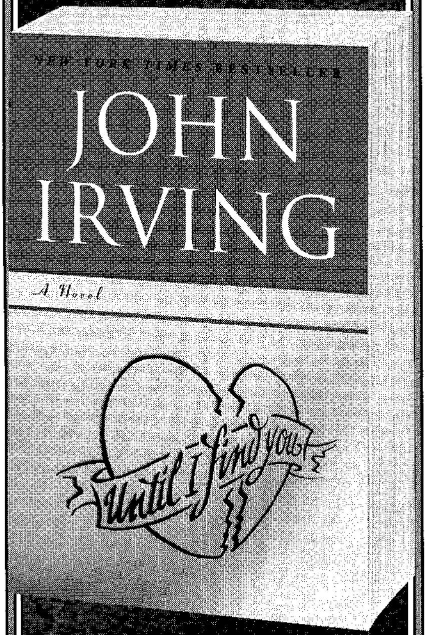

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DANCING WITH EMERSON

The wide pavilions of the old Post Road
from western Massachusetts toward Concord
one night past three, as I drove slowly in,
just freshly plowed, were empty.
The fields flapped out on either side,
climbing the blue hills like eternity.
There at the prison rotary
I could go only round
at last to dance with Mr. Emerson.
Oh waltz with me to guardhouse radios
playing night music for the stalled,
the jailers and the jailed locked in their crimes
like songs you live by.
Mr. Emerson, hello.
Do me the honor here outside the wall
strung with barbed wire where once was meadow.
My hand in his and his about my waist
outside the gates we whirled the circle.
And so I told him, shy, with due respect,
you were my first love, Mr. Emerson.
And this was early March,
Northeast the worst of months,
the snow piled high, like a rotunda.
I blizzard-fated, blind and scared,
and for the first time in my life
my dance card empty.
Without a word, he such a gentleman
held my hand, and I so lightly his
as searchlights scanned the prison yards,
and dance we did, my Mr. Emerson.
I drive that road so many seasons, drive hours
toward home or coming into Boston.
It was enough that only once we danced,
less time it takes to slip the wire,
or dip the quill, or kiss a man.

—*Deborah Digges*

Cantos: a typographical struggle, with some rewards. It was also an act of extraordinary kindness. I decided I liked Ezra Pound.

The war in Korea ended in July, 1953. My Korean War hitch ended that October. I had spent that hitch flying Second World War airplanes, as though the old war, my war, were still going on. I had flown four hundred hours in them, to no purpose except to keep me flying. Nothing had depended on what I did in the air; it was all a vacancy where a war should have been. And now that empty non-war was over. I was done, too, as a combat pilot; my skills had become as obsolete as the horse cavalry. I took some comfort from the thought that the planes and I had come to the end of our serious flying at the same time. Now I could take my family to London.

We found a flat in Richmond, and I got out the only guide I had to what I should do next: Pound's "Hynes/for London" letter. I didn't expect that a letter of introduction to the English avant-garde of forty years past would be of much use. Surely they'd all be dead. But they weren't—not all of them. And when I told them I'd come from Ezra

Pound they seemed eager, or at least curious, to see me.

Bertrand Russell lived just around the corner from our flat. When I was shown into his front hall, a figure of impossible thinness appeared at the top of the stairs and clung to the railing, asking in a hoarse stage whisper, "Who is it? Who is it?" But, once we were settled in his study, Russell was cordial and generous. He saw at once that I knew nothing about philosophy, and trimmed his conversation to my capacities. Over tea, he talked about writers of the Edwardian and war years. He was most lively about those he most disliked: Hulme, who had defended the war that Russell opposed (he didn't seem to think that dying in it was to Hulme's credit); and D. H. Lawrence, whose dark-wisdom-of-the-blood stuff offended Russell's faith in reason. Russell and Hulme had quarrelled about the war in print; could I reprint Russell's side of the argument in my book? Of course, of course, Russell said at once. He didn't remember what he had said, exactly, but he took it for granted that he was right.

Jacob Epstein lived in a tall white house in Hyde Park Gate. The ground-floor room facing the street was evidently his showroom: examples of his portrait busts stood around on pedestals—there was Joseph Conrad, there was T. S. Eliot—and watercolor paintings of flowers hung on the walls. A trestle table ran down the middle of the room. We sat there and had tea, served by women of the house, whom Epstein ignored.

In a house like this, so handsome and well appointed, and on the fashionable side of the park, Epstein seemed out of place. He was a short, thick-armed man with a pugnacious face. A good man in a fight, I thought. Dressed as he was, in work clothes, he looked more like a stonemason or a plumber than a famous artist. His talk was like that, too: blunt and plain. He spoke of Hulme with affection and some amusement. They'd been friends.

Epstein thought that Hulme knew more about what modernism really amounted to than anybody else of his generation. Pity he died, he said; we could have used him later. After tea, he showed me his studio. His great phallic

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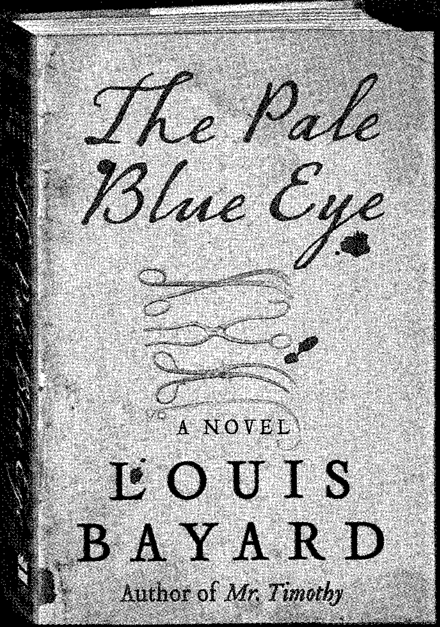

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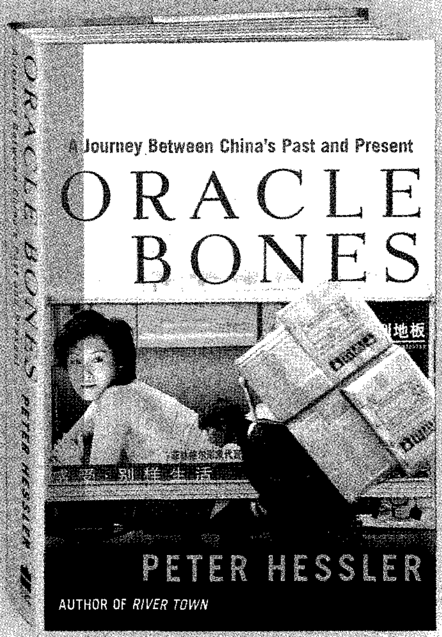

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figure of Adam was there, dominating the space. Nobody would buy it, Epstein said; it was too shocking. I thought it looked like Epstein himself—physical, strong, male.

I told him that Pound had asked me to give him his *saluti.* "Ah, yes, Ezra," he said. And that was all. Pound, being a poet, seemed to have nothing to do with Epstein's world of stone and bronze.

Another letter from Pound came to the flat in Richmond—a reply, evidently, to a progress report I'd sent. It contained more judgments, and more recollections of Hulme. He wrote as though by now he had a clear image in his mind of the book I was writing; it would be a book full of strong opinions, dismissals, and *saluti.* I knew by then that my book would be different from that. Pound probably wouldn't like it.

That spring and summer, we rented a house on the Channel coast in Devon. I'd taken it sight unseen from a small ad in *The Lady:* thatched cottage, the ad said, in delightful village, walk to beach. And that was all true. It was also true that rain fell every day. I sat in the spare room at my Olivetti and worked on the book, and Liz and the girls went out in slickers and Wellingtons and slopped around the village, or walked down to the beach, gathering wet wildflowers out of the hedgerows. At summer's end, we boarded the Queen Mary at Southampton and went home.

Back at my small college, I wrote Pound one more letter, asking for permission to quote various remarks of his in my introduction and suggesting that I might pay him another visit. He replied at once, this time not on his eccentric typewriter but in his own hand:

> O. Kay
> best for '55
> no need to bother any one else about them thaar itemz,
> no buddy else has any strings on 'em.
> Sure come in any Tu. Th. Sat. Sun 2-4 p.m.
> Ez P

That was Pound in his favorite role, the Plain Amurikan, speaking his own version of the national barbaric yawp. It was also Pound the generous man, giving his words away to a young writer because he needed them. I should have replied. I should have gone down to St. Elizabeth's again. But I didn't. In a couple of years, he was released from the hospital, and returned at once to Italy. "Only a madman," he said, "would live in the U.S."

By then, I was deep in the academic life again—all the classes and meetings and term papers and reviews and lectures that make professors feel busy. "Further Speculations" was published, and got a few reviews, and a university press promised to publish my dissertation when they got around to it. I was promoted and given tenure. We moved into a big house on campus. My daughters went to elementary school.

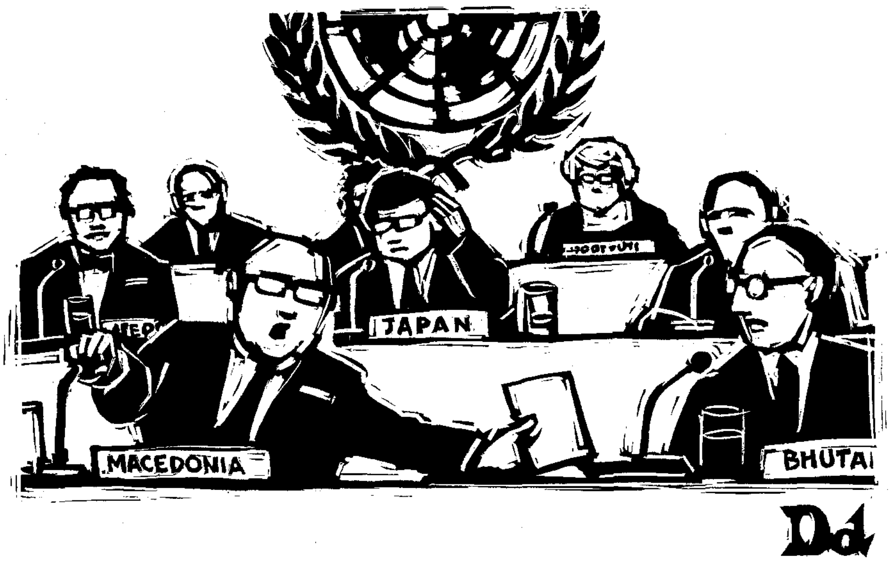
I liked that life. I liked the mixture of bustle and solitude. I liked talking to a class, how the students looked up at me, and how, just when I'd said something I wasn't sure made any sense, they all stopped looking and bent their heads and wrote it in their notebooks. They seemed to like me well enough. One winter afternoon, Liz phoned me at my office to say that one of my students had just built an altar out of snow in our front yard and was sacrificing something on it—a pork chop, she thought. What should she do? Go out and thank him, I said. Surely it's meant as a compliment.

Now and then, on fine days when the barometer was high and the visibility was unlimited, I felt that something was missing. When that happened, I drove to a small airfield west of town and flew what they had—Cessnas, and Piper Cubs, small single-engine planes that couldn't do anything but fly straight and level, and maybe try a sedate spin if you insisted. It wasn't much fun—not like those days in a Corsair up over the Outer Banks—but it was better than not flying, the way K rations are better than not eating at all.

In 1959, I tried for another fellowship, and got it, and moved Liz and the girls back to London for another year. The next spring, we crossed the Channel for the first time. We'd visit only two cities, we decided—Paris and Rome.

Paris. Well, Paris was Paris. We stayed in a small hotel on the Left Bank. The girls had their own room, and ate their croissants on their own balcony, and watched the police cars rush by, sirens *nee-naw*-ing, chasing Algerians (it was a year of political unrest in France). We did what tourists do in Paris, if two of them are ten and eight: walked by the Seine, stood in the shadows in Notre-Dame, strolled in the gardens at Versailles, watched a Punch and Judy show in the Luxembourg Gardens, and spoke halting French.

And then Rome: at last, eight years after our Italian tour of duty had been cancelled, I was going there. We travelled on a night train and woke in the morning to that different air and light that writers write about, the bedazzling world of the Mediterranean. We walked around among the crumbled stones of the Forum, we stood silently in the Sistine Chapel (Mandy lay down on a bench to see the ceiling better, and was scolded fiercely by a guard), we climbed the hills and looked at the Tiber, we



"Sh-h-h. It's a birthday card for Liechtenstein. Sign it and pass it on."

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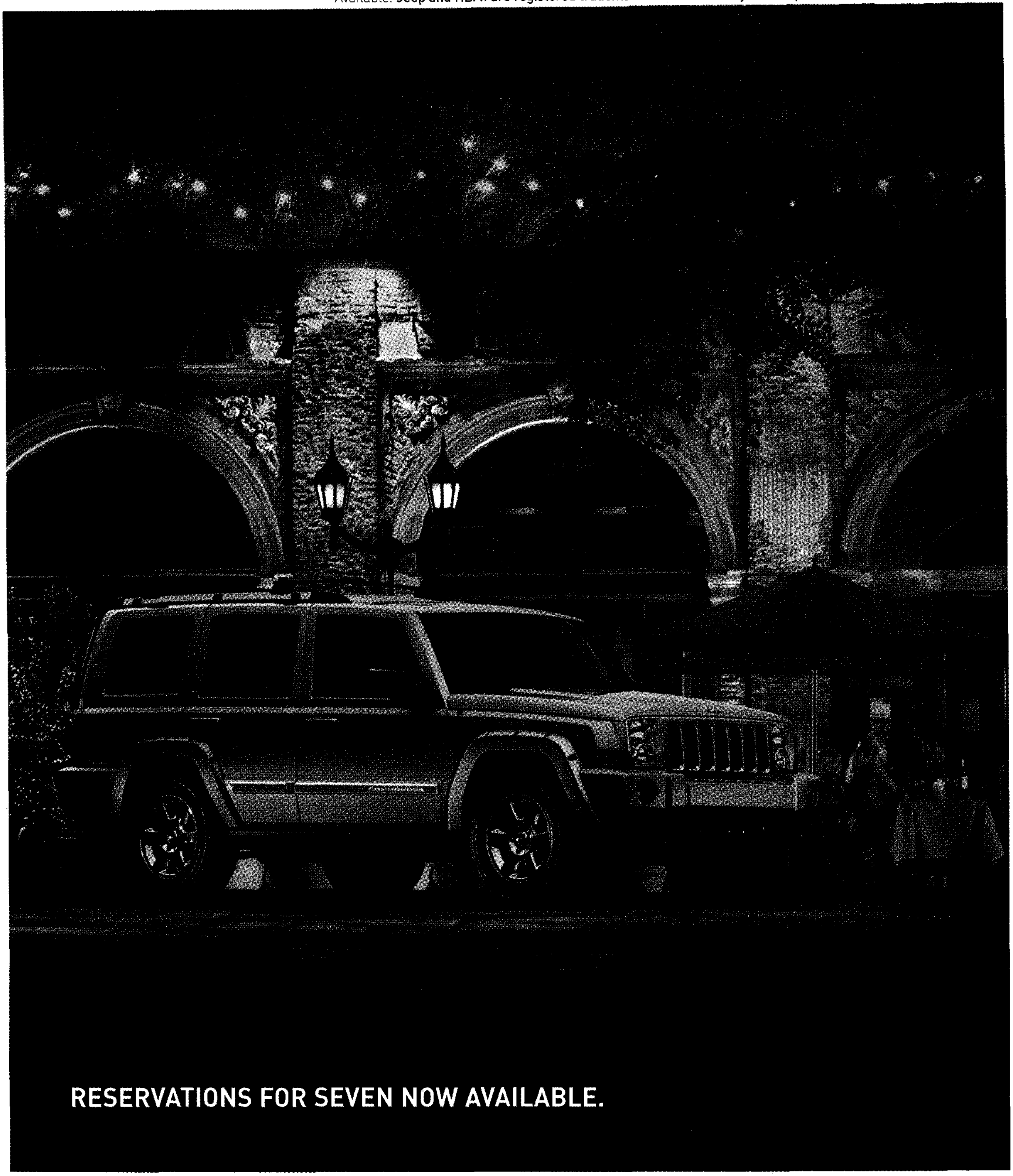
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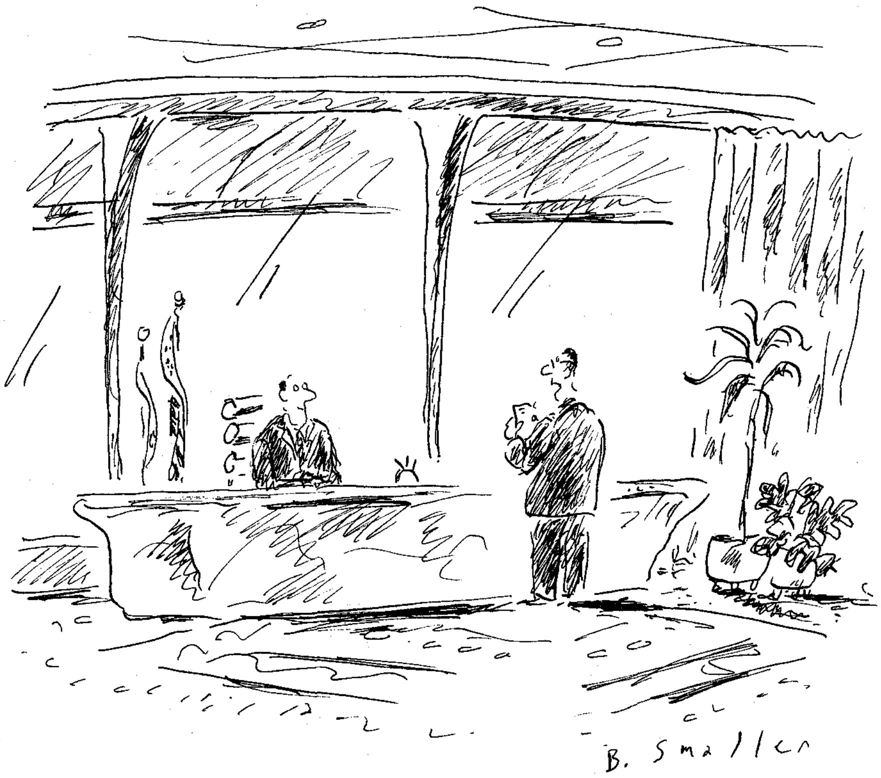


"You can't please all the people all the time, so you might as well please the pharmaceutical lobby."

rode the *circolare*, and the girls learned to buy gelati in Italian.

When we'd been there for a week or so, Liz wore out, and demanded an afternoon nap. I said I'd take the girls into the park across the street from our pensione, let them run around for a while. We entered the Borghese gardens through the Porta Pinciana, and walked along a gravelled path in the hot sun. On our left was a wide green meadow. On the far side of the meadow, in a paddock, men in tan uniforms were exercising horses, jumping hurdles, turning. Italian cavalry, I decided, practicing horsemanship, or maybe preparing for a dressage competition. The girls ran off onto the meadow and began some complicated game. I couldn't hear what they were shouting.

No one else was in sight, neither on the meadow nor along the path: only the galloping horsemen and the two swooping girls. Then, at the far end of the path, a figure appeared, striding toward where I stood. As he approached, I saw that it was Pound. I waited until he was near me and then spoke, told him who I was. Yes, yes, he said impatiently, as though of course he knew me, as though we had met last week. He gestured toward a bench, and we sat down together.

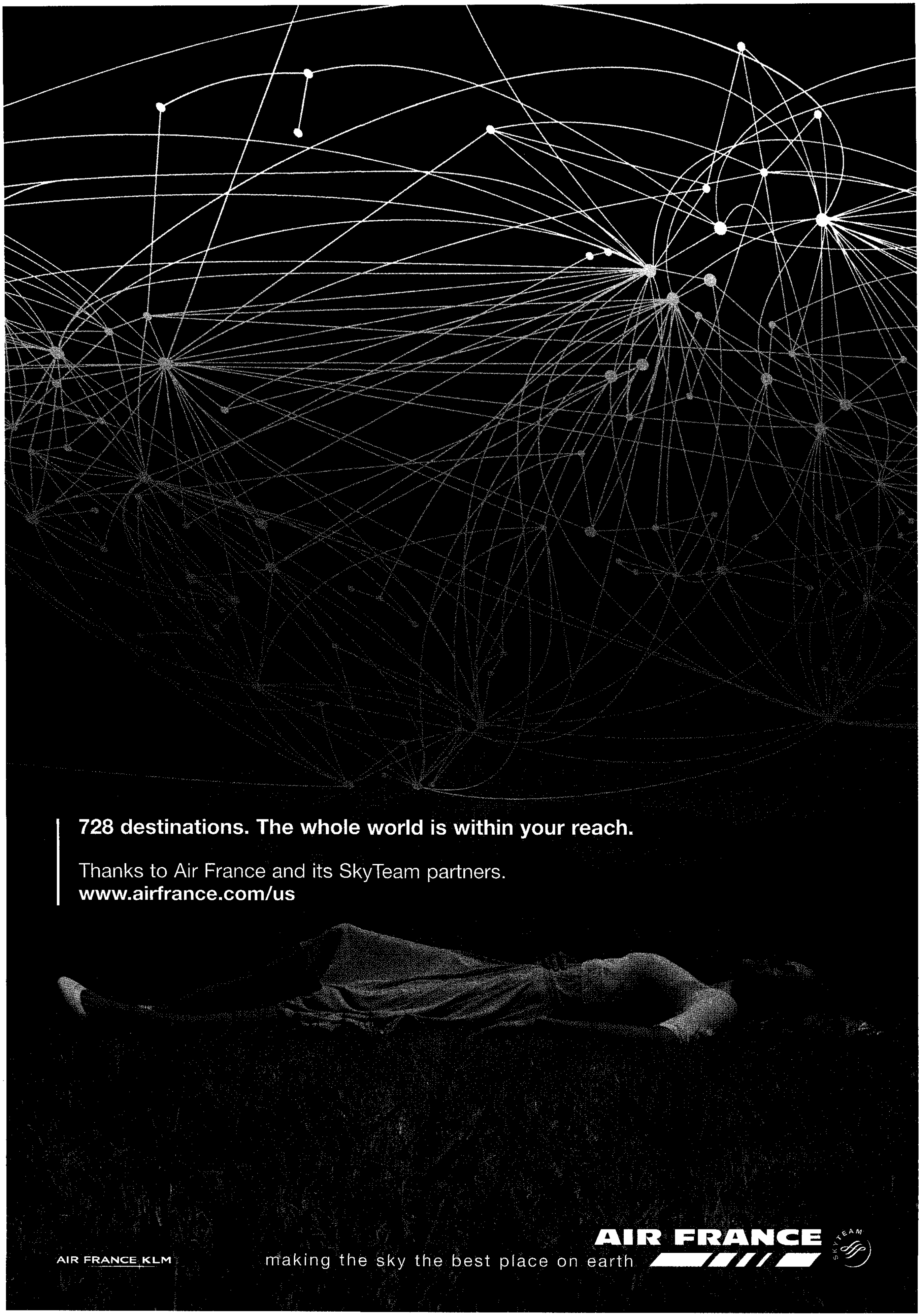
He hadn't changed much: he was a little thinner, perhaps, the furrows in his face more deeply scored, his eyes sunk farther into their sockets. There was a little less of the old imperial manner, and something new in its place—a quietness, the kind that comes after great trouble.

My head was full of Ford Madox Ford just then; I thought he'd be a central figure in the new book I was writing. Pound obligingly called up his recollections of the old Edwardian Ford. But his mind wasn't on the old days. He wanted to talk about "The Cantos," his vast unfinished epic poem. He had no planned ending for it, he said. He went on writing at it, "five or six fragments in case I give out," because "there are a few things that have to be said." But he couldn't complete it. He didn't seem to feel that this unfinished state was a failure, not a personal one; it was history that had failed, not the poet. "An epic must be in tune with the times," he said; and the times change. The plan of "The Cantos," which had seemed adequate when Pound began the poem, after the First World War, couldn't give order to what had subsequently happened in history.

"It's difficult," he said, "hanging on to the truth while admitting error." More difficult for him than for most, probably: he had believed so completely in his understanding of things. "We're bombarded by propaganda!" he exclaimed, turning to me with some of the old fierceness. The problem was how to resist brainwashing, the power of the system to shape our thoughts. He spoke of A. R. Orage, a friend of Hulme's. Orage had taken up Theosophy, a made-up religious philosophy that Pound surely didn't think much of; yet "his Theosophy sustained him all his life"—as though any set of values, however absurd, would do if it provided an alternative to "the profit system." Truth didn't seem to enter into the equation. Orage's system had worked for Orage; Pound's hadn't worked for him.

You should talk to Alice Marks, he said; or was it Marx? She was Orage's secretary. She might still be around. I'll give you her phone number. He stopped a passing Italian and asked, very politely, if he might borrow a pencil, wrote a number on a bus ticket he pulled from his pocket, and gave it to me. A fifty-year-old telephone number. I thanked him.

Eventually, Pound said he had to leave, and stood up, a little stiffly. I'd like to introduce you to my daughters, I said, and I called them from the meadow. This is Mr. Pound. He's a great poet. Jo, the younger, responded first: solemnly and silently, she extended her small hand, arm straight out the way a man might do it, took Pound's hand, and shook it once, up and down. Then she ran back onto the grassy field. Mandy, two years older, was more aware of the occasion; she looked up into Pound's bearded face for a moment and then held her hand out before her, palm down, fingers a little bent, as a princess might, greeting a duke. Pound took the waiting hand in his, bowed, and kissed it gently. Then he straightened and strode off, a solitary erect figure, toward the Pincian Gate. Mandy stood looking after him, still holding her hand half raised, where the Great Poet had kissed it. ♦



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IVORY COAST, 2000

BY TONY D'SOUZA

I was in Abidjan in 2000, shortly after General Robert Gueï's bloodless Christmas Eve coup, which eventually helped to usher in the bloodshed of the past six years in Ivory Coast. At the time, there was a small contingent of United States Marines in the city—the U.S. Embassy Guard. They were housed in a spacious apartment in a downtown high-rise in the Plateau district. I was in my first year with the Peace Corps, and whenever I was granted a break from my posting in the bush I'd travel to the city, to a Peace Corps-run hostel that was always crowded with volunteers. Now and again, eager to spend time with the white women among us, the marines would invite us over. They were well provisioned: alcohol, air-conditioning, and all the latest magazines, CDs, and DVDs. When they called, we'd round up a couple of cabfuls of the willing, and then happily dig into the marines' top-shelf goods. The women needed little coercing—they enjoyed the Snickers bars, *People* magazines, and Bacardi as much as anybody.

EMMANUEL GUIBERT

The marines' apartment—leather couches, tiled bathrooms, and a big-screen TV—was spotless, and they ferried between it and the Embassy in black armored S.U.V.s. They lived a life so sheltered and insular that they could have been anywhere. At the Embassy, they spent their shifts behind bulletproof glass, using an intercom to command visitors to present their papers through a narrow slot. They left the confines of partition and machine only on Sundays, when they would jog together through the leafy and exclusive Riviera district, to the delight of the few gardeners and shoeshine boys allowed in. Even then, they kept a tight phalanx: large, well-muscled white men rising and falling in sonorous unison in brand-new combat boots.

The marines also maintained a shelf of bottles at the Grand Bleu, a small night club in Deux Plateaux, with velvet couches, a cozy parquet dance floor, and a house stable of the finest prostitutes in West Africa. It was a de-facto social club for the white invested male—C.I.A. and Mossad agents, American timber and rubber men, Embassy functionaries, tenured teachers from the International School—and a definite no-go for unwashed Peace Corps volunteers. But, one night, that's where we went—Albert and I. Albert was a fellow-volunteer, and famous among us for once having walked across the border into Mali to try to buy a camel. At the Grand Bleu, we shook cigarettes out of the mangled packs in the breast pockets of our crumpled shirts, and ordered neat whiskeys. Then we rolled our shoulders and sipped those whiskeys like two cowboys in Manhattan. All around us, conversation stopped just long enough to let us know we'd been noticed. Then we were ignored.

The marines were there, doing shots of Grey Goose, and they were animated and loud. We pieced together from their conversation that they had been invited to train some Ivorian commandos in sharpshooting at the military range, and that the Ivorians had closed their eyes as they shot, their bullets raising puffs of dirt from the turf.

"Can you believe these people?" one of the marines said, laughing, and shook his head. "They closed their fucking eyes."

Albert and I leaned back against the bar to watch the women on the dance floor. They all wore long braids and hoop earrings, and were shuffling their feet as though half asleep. No one was dancing with them, so, after another whiskey, we went out to them. We held the girls close. Soon, we were kissing them. Then the club's bouncers put us into headlocks with such force that we could feel ourselves beginning to pass out, and tossed us onto the street. We didn't go to the Grand Bleu again.

A few weeks later, a story about the marines began to circulate. One night, they were watching a new DVD together—my guess is porn, but who knows—when the doorbell rang. The marines were not alarmed, because they had African security-service guards screening visitors down in the lobby. So one of the marines set down his bottle of beer on the glass coffee table and went to answer it. At the door was a gang of African bandits with AK-47s.

The marines jumped up from the couch and put up their hands, and, for whatever reason, the bandits made them strip down to their briefs. The bandits went into the marines' closets, got out their uniforms, put them on, and began to sing and dance. Then they stubbed out their cigarettes on the floor, stuffed their pockets with liquor bottles and DVDs, and left. They didn't steal anything major—just sang and danced in the uniforms while the marines held their balls and shivered.

The next morning, the marines canned their security guards, and the story got out. Soon, they moved from Plateau into a three-story maximum-security mansion with a metal detector and cameras, in Riviera, which was probably where they'd belonged in the first place. They kept a lower profile then. But the story remained popular, maybe because the only Ivorians with access to AK-47s then were government soldiers.

Here's another story: During my Peace Corps training, I lived with a cocoa-growing family in a village in the south of the country. My host father, Donatien, was the choir director at the village's Catholic church. He had two wives, and how that blended with Catholicism I don't know. He liked me and wanted me to learn as much as I could about his people, the Ghwa. He showed me the tribe's sacred tree, a towering thing in the forest with gris-gris tied like ornaments in its highest branches, and he taught me a few words of the tribe's secret language, which was only for men. One day, he took me to the edge of the village, to an overgrown stretch of bracken on the bank of the Comoe River. He poked about in the elephant grass with a stick, pointing out thick cement slabs that were once the foundations of huts. Donatien said, "This is where the Dioula used to live."

The Dioula were Muslim people from the north whom I'd soon be sent to serve. "What happened to them?" I asked.

Donatien stared at the foundations as though he were searching his memory. Then he said, "The price of cocoa fell, times became hard. We told the Dioula to go, but they refused."

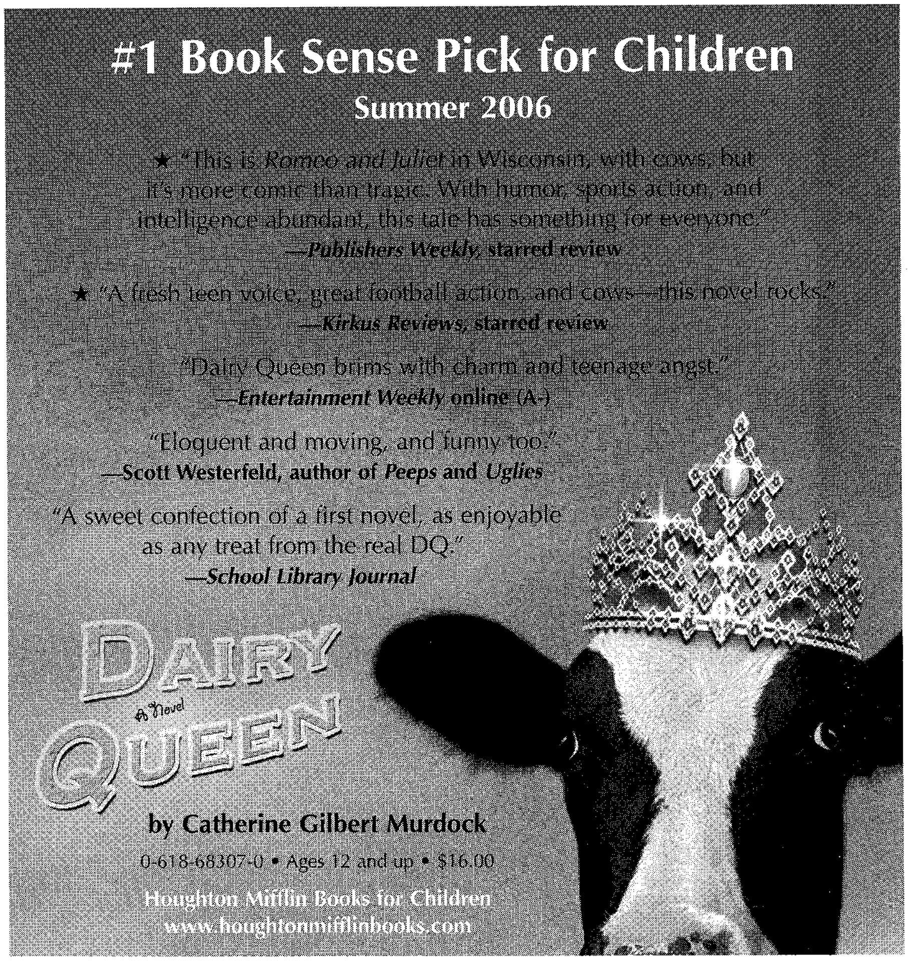
"What did you do?"

"We came in the night and killed them."

Back at his compound, his many children ran to greet me, as they always did. Three of the little boys had their mouths stuffed with something, and they groaned and rolled their eyes with happiness as they tugged at my hands to make me notice.

"What do you have in your mouths?" I asked.

They threw back their heads and opened their jaws. Out flew three birds—a dash of yellow, two dashes of blue—and there was barely time for me to recognize what had happened before the colors had already disappeared in the sky. ♦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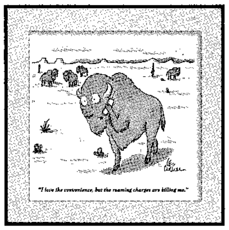
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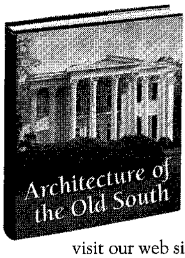
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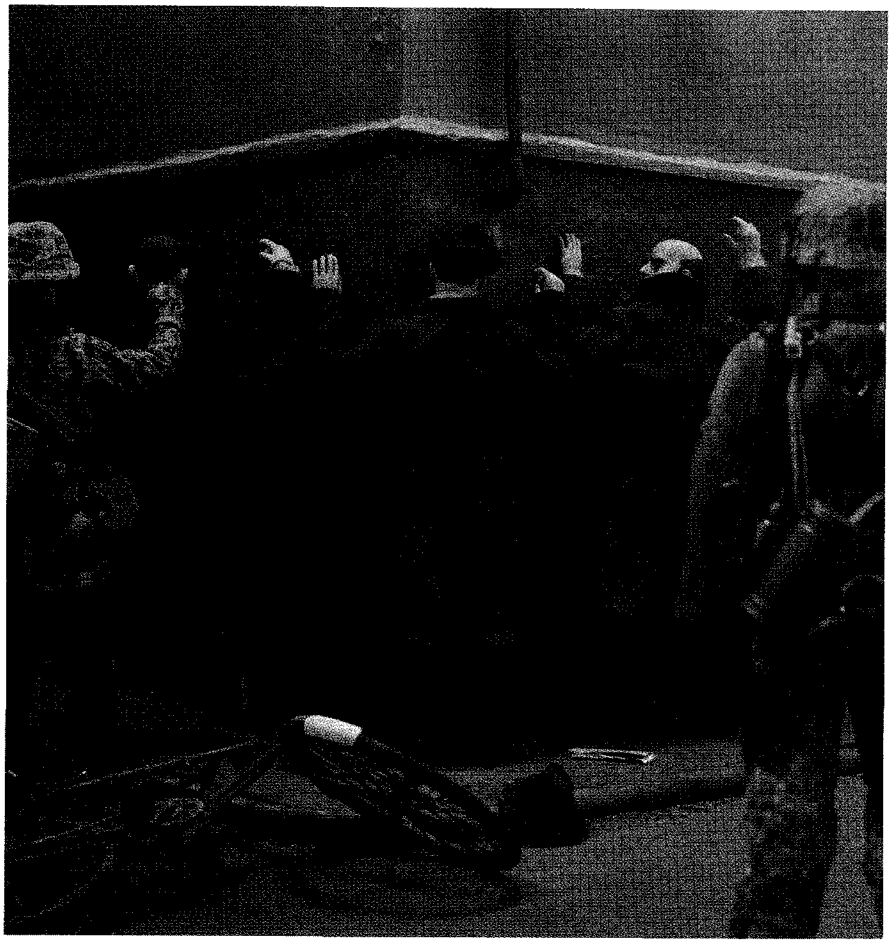
FICTION

WAITING FOR DEATH IN A HOTEL

BY ITALO CALVINO

At a certain time in the morning, the prisoners' wives began to arrive and started gesturing, their faces turned up toward the windows. From the top floor, the prisoners leaned out to ask and answer questions; and it was as if the women's hands on the ground and the men's hands up above were trying to reach across those metres of empty space and touch. There was nothing about the big hotel, recently demoted to a barracks and a prison, that could give concrete shape to the inmates' loss of freedom—no iron bars or high walls. The only visible manifestation of their anguish was the short yet insurmountable vertical distance between those with their feet in the hotel garden, who were still in charge of their own destiny, and those who had been brought to the hotel as though it were a country from which there was no return.

Every now and then, one of the prisoners at the window would turn to the hallway behind him and call out a name: "Ferrari! Ferrari! Your wife's down there!" The man summoned would push his way through to the already crowded window, and start smiling wanly and making gestures that were intended to signal resignation.



Diego never went to the window; his family was far away, scattered by the war. He'd had enough of the endless seesawing of predictions and suppositions, of good and bad news, that the coming and going in the hotel garden conveyed to those above. His nerves were in shreds. He longed to let himself drift—whether toward disaster or toward the miraculous salvation that he still hoped for. He longed for summers spent stretched out on the sand at the water's edge, like the many summers of sand and sea in his past, summers that had brought the lazy and unenterprising man to this point, to his first useful summer, which was now coming to an end.

But time was a web of tense nerves, a puzzle that could be reshaped into a thousand patterns, all of them meaningless. Forlornly, the prisoners, most of whom had been captured by chance in the streets, paced the linoleum of the hotel's bare rooms, where only the white lips of the basins and the bidets grinned, blocked with foul water.

When Diego had been transferred to the hotel, the day before, from a prison in the fort, where he had spent a day and a night with other men who had now perhaps been killed, it felt like being exhumed—finding himself in the spacious hotel, with the warmth of these men all around him, ignorant and easily optimistic. He had laughed and joked, meeting up with men he knew; Michele, the comrade with whom he had been captured, was also among the prisoners in the hotel. The two men had rejoiced at finding each other safe, at being reunited, after a twenty-four-hour separation during which each had feared for the other's fate. Diego had felt moved but also encouraged as he ran his hand over the roughness of Michele's overcoat and the smoothness of his big, bald head, which came up to Diego's chest. Michele had cackled nervously, revealing his few teeth, and asked, "What do you say, Diego, will we put one over on the Nazis?"

Diego had said, "I say we'll do it. We'll put one over on the whole of the Third Reich, we will."

"Even on von Ribbentrop?"

"Even on von Ribbentrop. Even on von Brauchitsch. Even on Dr. Goebbels."

And they'd crouched down beside a cold radiator to dispel their anxiety with laughter and jokes (they didn't yet know that several of those who'd been captured with them had already been exe-

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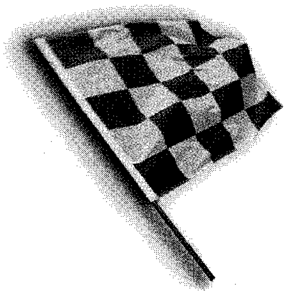

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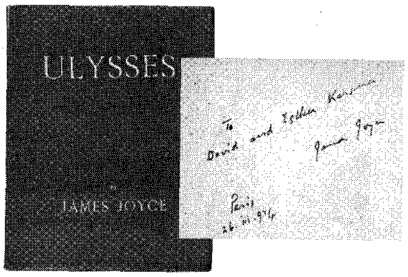

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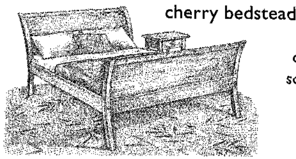

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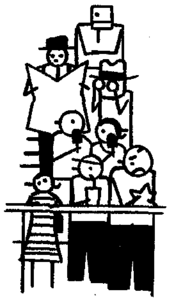
cuted), and Diego had felt the happiness of someone who has just been released after years in jail.

The prison where he'd been held was an old fort on the harbor, where the German anti-aircraft artillery was now installed. His cell had been used at some point as a detention area for German soldiers. On the walls were graffiti written by German homosexuals: "*Mein lieber Kamerad* Franz, I am shut up here and you are far from me"; "*Mein lieber Kamerad* Hans, my life was happy when I was near you."



There'd been about twenty of them in that cramped cell, stretched out on the ground in a row. An old man with a white beard, dressed in hunting clothes—the father of one of the other prisoners—would get up every so often during the night, stepping over the bodies, and urinate, with considerable effort, into a can in the corner. Rust had worn holes in the can, and soon the old man's urine would flood the cell floor, like a river. Inhuman barked orders, as if issued by men who were half wolves, echoed through the fort at each changing of the guard.

The iron bars of the cell window looked out over the cliffs; the sea roared all night as it coursed through the rocks, like blood in the arteries and thoughts in the spirals of the brain. And each man thought endlessly of the corner he should never have turned, the corner that had brought him here: for Diego, it was the street corner that he and Michele had gone around to avoid the cordon, and which had put them face to face with a group of Germans in full battle gear, stopping passersby in the middle of the road three metres away, as if in the opening scene of a film.

The chain of sensations and images circled around in his mind like a rosary, telling him over and over that things couldn't have gone any other way, as he lay enclosed in the cell with German homosexual graffiti on the walls and the old man constantly urinating in the dark—or now, as he sat beneath the peeling stucco of the top floor of the hotel, suspended between life and death, while the men around him lay face down as if struck by vertigo.

Each day, a certain number of them were selected: either for life or for death. In the morning, the sergeant and Snakeskin would appear with a bundle of documents in their hands: those who got their documents back were free to leave. They'd hug their wives and walk off arm-in-arm across the hotel lawn, trailed by the envious eyes of those left behind.

In the evening a lead-gray van full of armed soldiers would come to a halt outside the hotel. The sergeant and Snakeskin would call out other names, and one or two men would be driven off, surrounded by those helmeted soldiers. The next day, their women would turn up below the windows asking for them, and then go from one military office to another, pleading with the interpreters: no one knew where the men had been taken. Other women spoke of shots heard in the evening, down in the evacuated area near the harbor.

For Diego and Michele, too, there were only these two alternatives: freedom or death. Either their documents would be recognized as valid—and in that case they really had put one over on the whole Reich—and they would be able to talk about it in the hideouts of an evening amid the laughter of their comrades; or it would be the lead-gray van, disappearing among the ruined houses by the port, Snakeskin having turned them in.

Snakeskin examined all the prisoners on arrival, to see if he recognized any former comrades among the men lined up outside the hotel. A slight lad in his tight uniform, with a wet smile on his parched lips flecked with saliva, Snakeskin walked along rubbing his sweaty hands together. He was pale, with a cold that reddened his nostrils and eyelids, and he had the beginnings of a blondish mustache. His eyes glistened with emotion at the idea that he was the arbiter of life and death over the men who stood before him, holding their breath at his every word and gesture.

These were moments of inebriating triumph for Snakeskin, but they were colored always by anguish. Every time he appeared in the hotel hallways the

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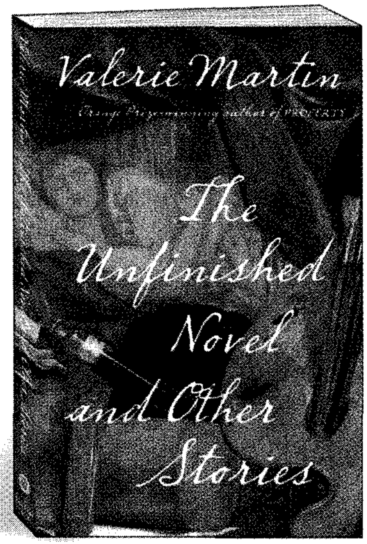
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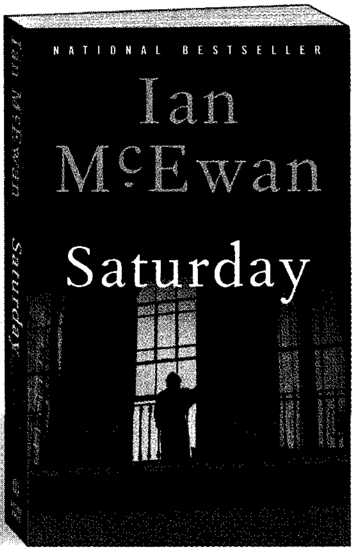
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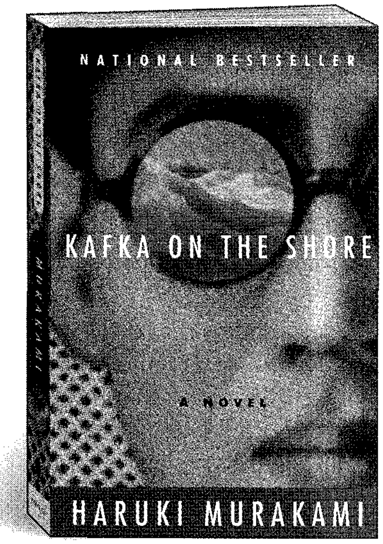
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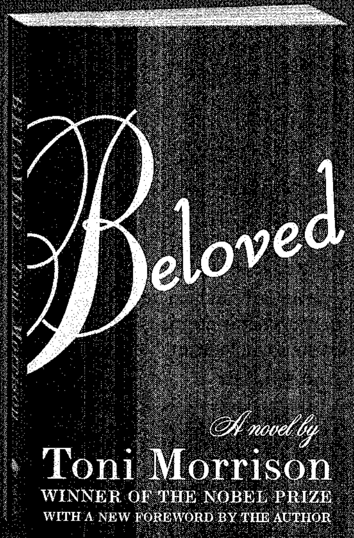
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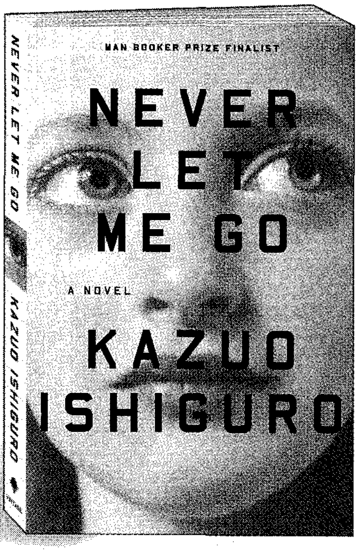
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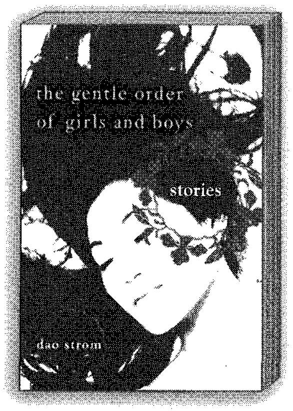

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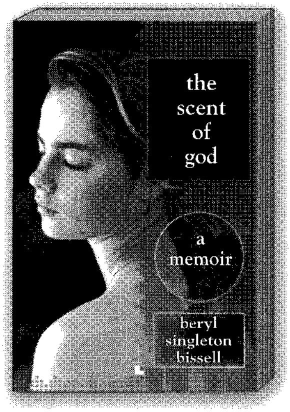

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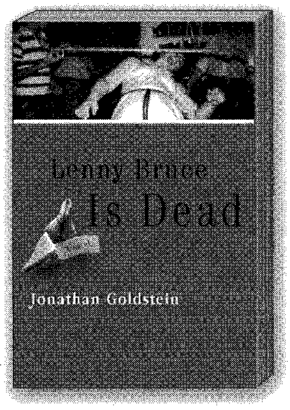

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COUNTERPOINT

inmates would crowd around to plead with him, calling him by his name: "Tullio, Tullio." He'd look at the docile men around him and see the sharp hatred beneath their submission. To one of them he'd said, "Today you are courting me; tomorrow you will shoot me in the back."

Snakeskin would save one day, condemn the next: he was capricious and ambiguous. Many of those who'd known him before, when he was on their side, believed they were finished when they found themselves being interrogated in his presence. But he pretended not to recognize them. Others who thought that he'd be merciful because of past favors or friendships had seen him bare his gums in a sneer, taunting them like a cat with a mouse. At times Snakeskin seemed set on bloodshed, at others in the grip of remorse.

During the inspection, he had stopped in front of Michele and said, "We've met somewhere before." Michele had jerked his head up as if a drop of cold water had gone down his back and, with a bewildered look, had made a grimace of ignorance.

Diego sat on the tiled floor of the hallway, his hands on his knees. Michele was beside him, looking out the window. He was waiting for his wife: she had gone to talk to Luciano, an S.S. interpreter who worked for the committee and who had pledged to get them out. Michele's wife was much younger than him, a child bride. She had big gray cloudy eyes, but there was something stern in her face, framed as it was by smooth black hair, and something joyful about her thin body, in her short lilac dress. Seeing her made you regret that life was what it was—painful and obscene—that nothing was settled and peaceful. With a woman like that, Diego would have liked to wander through sunny countries where there was no injustice.

He said, "If we survive, when all this is over, I want to come back to this hotel for a week, when it opens again for tourists." Michele didn't reply. Diego said, "I'll stretch out on the floor right here where I am now, in the middle of all the respectable people who will think I'm mad."

Michele continued to look out the window, not turning around. Then he turned and quickly said, as though it were about to escape his mind, "Diego, if you want any bread, my wife has brought some. She's given it to a soldier who will give us some."

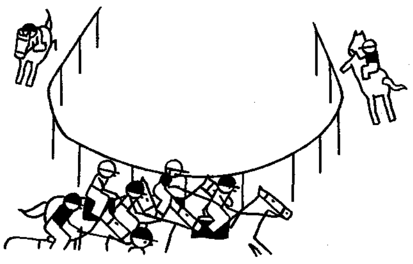
Diego asked, "Your wife came? Did she speak . . ."

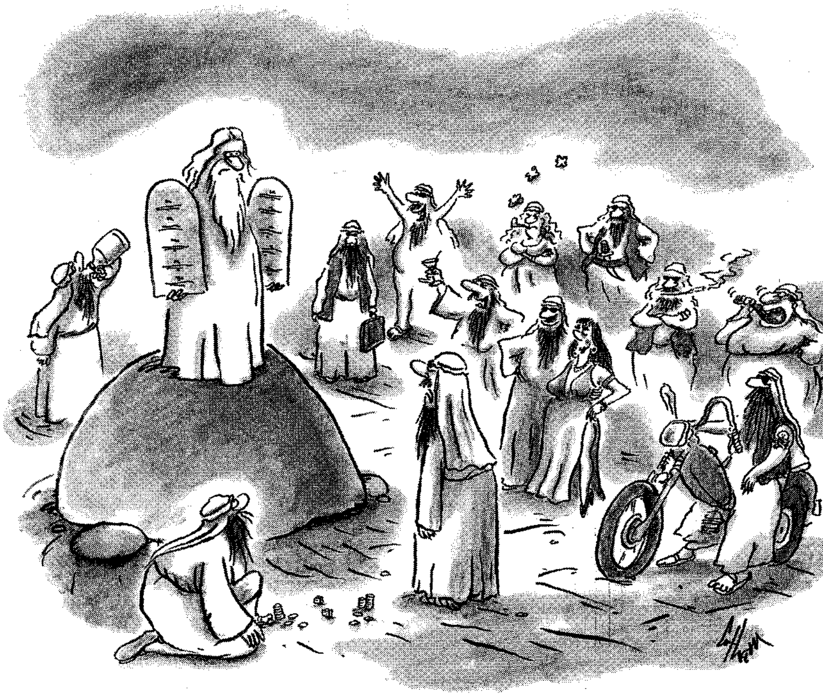
Michele did not look him in the eye; he was staring now at the ceiling. "Listen, Diego, I've had it. Snakeskin's shafted me. Luciano told my wife. She's down there crying." These were Michele's words; and in those words was the simplicity of something long feared and now inevitable.

Michele had started to pace up and down the hallway, his hands in his pockets, his enormous eyes hidden beneath his heavy eyelids. Sometimes the others addressed him and he stared back at them, bewildered, as though having to return from a great distance to focus on what they were saying. Maybe he was thinking of the void, in order to prepare himself for not existing.

Diego followed Michele's pacing from where he sat, worried that the other prisoners in their ignorance would put an end to that death-walk: one word from the talk of living men might be enough to make Michele suddenly desperate for the life he knew he'd lost. Diego knew that the man in the hallway was walking toward death, that it was now merely a thousand or two thousand paces away. This was Michele's funeral procession: he was a dead man pacing to his own grave, along that hallway with its flaking stucco ceiling roses and the faded traces of wall mirrors above the marble mantels.

As he watched Michele, Diego reflected on him. An aging comrade, Michele was a good man, despite his faults: not very courageous, not entirely in line with the Party. They had often quar-





"I hope this isn't meant to be a criticism of our current life style."

• •

relled over Michele's obsession with spouting slogans, his desire to always be right, his claim to be an autodidact.

Now Michele was walking along the hallway, his hands in the pockets of his overcoat, his bald head sunk into his shoulders, his big bovine eyes lost in the void, as if bewildered by the enormity of all that was about to be taken from them. He was a poor soul in an old overcoat, with a three-day beard, but Diego seemed to see in him, in those bovine eyes of his, in his slow absorbed pacing, a threatening force of nature: it seemed to him that Michele would continue to walk like this even after death, that the next day he would enter the rooms where the German officers were enjoying their debauchery—he would come in through the window, enormous but clad still in his poor overcoat, his hands in his pockets, his bald head and his bovine eyes lost in the void, and he would walk with his slow steps in total silence across the champagne-stained tablecloths, past the illuminated Christmas trees, the sparkling Iron Crosses, the naked breasts and thighs, to the German officers' consternation and the women's screams. And he would continue thus to walk the earth, even after the war was over. The rich would have no peace in their houses, no joy in their families, without this short but enormous man coming in through the windows and crossing their rooms. On the tables around which war and peace are decided, and everywhere that people obstruct, destroy, or lie to others, wherever falsehood is preached, wherever unjust gods are adored, there would always appear the shade of the man killed at the harbor that evening.

One of the prisoners spoke of men hanged by the Germans; Diego saw Michele dangling from a harbor lamppost, and it seemed to him that all the men around him had killed Michele, all of them; it was an endless sin that would remove all joy from their lives, and that could be expiated only at the end of time.

In the ripples where Michele had disappeared into the water, all that floated was his overcoat, its arms outstretched like a cross. The bell in the red buoy in the middle of the harbor rang out for the dead comrade, undulating in the waves. Beneath the water, the hawser that anchored the buoy ended in a noose, with Michele's neck inside it. But then Michele's head floated to the surface, green with seaweed, with staring eyes; it let out a cry.

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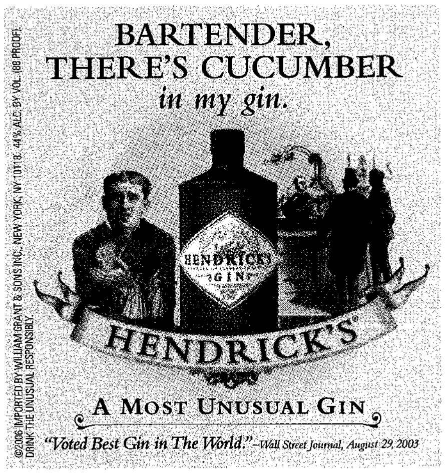

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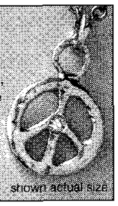

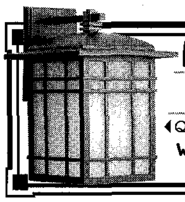

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SELF-PORTRAIT WITH RED EYES

Throughout our affair of eleven years,
disappearing into the pleasure-unto-death
acts I recall now as love and, afterward,
orbiting through the long, deep sleeps
in which memory, motor of everything,
reconstituted itself, I cared nothing about
life outside the walls of our bedroom.

The hand erasing writes the real thing,
and I am trying. I loved life and see now
this was a weakness. I loved the little
births and deaths occurring in us daily.
Even the white spit on your sharp teeth
was the foam of love, saying to me: It is not true,
after all, that you were never loved.

—*Henri Cole*

The old man dressed in hunting gear got up in the night and began to urinate, groaning, standing enormous over all of them. The rivers overflowed; all men, good and evil, were submerged. The old man's organs, weary from having generated all men, were now drowning the universe. Only Snakeskin fled over the earth, trying to escape, rubbing his sweaty hands, which were doused in the foul water of the hotel bidets. But every coffin held a dead man, murdered by him; the crowd surrounded him, submerged him in the flood.

The van was late that evening and everyone was relieved, saying that it would not come. Michele waited, watching from the window in the gathering gloom. Instead, four tourist buses arrived, driven by German soldiers. There was agitation, questioning, speculation among the inmates. Soon, the sergeant came up with his list and called out their names, one by one. Michele and Diego were called, along with the others, by the false names they had given; indeed, the sergeant made a mess of Michele's name, as though he had never really understood it.

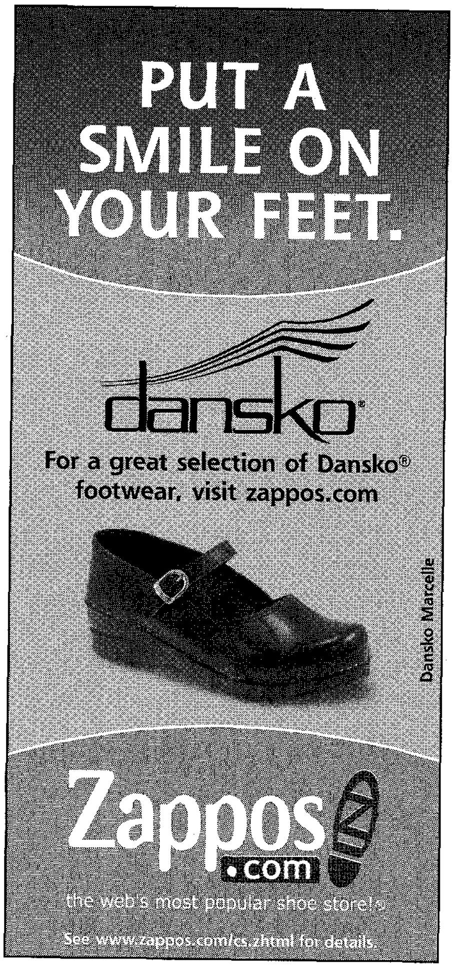
The prisoners were divided into four groups and put onto the coaches one by one. Diego and Michele found themselves together again, still part of the crowd, which was almost jealous of the injustice the two comrades had suffered. In the anxious voices of those men, one word erupted from God knows where: "Marassi, Marassi. They are taking us to the Marassi prison." But that word was, in a way, a source of comfort to Michele and Diego—it meant that they were leaving, leaving the anguish of living beside death, leaving Snakeskin and his ambiguity, leaving these familiar places that were teeming with traps.

Diego felt the rough cloth of Michele's overcoat beneath his fingers, felt the blood flowing again through his arteries. He said, "I told you that Luciano talked balls. Didn't I tell you?"

And Michele said over and over again, "What a bullshitter, eh?" with a smile that was now more relaxed, as though he were finally getting the joke.

And the comrades understood that whatever their destiny, whatever violence, cries, and exhaustion awaited them, they would nevertheless savor the bloody taste of being alive, of sharing pain like bread. The harsh tang of life would stay with them from now on, in the screaming tunnels of Marassi, in the desolate barracks of the North, all the way until they came back. ♦

(*Translated, from the Italian, by Martin McLaughlin.*)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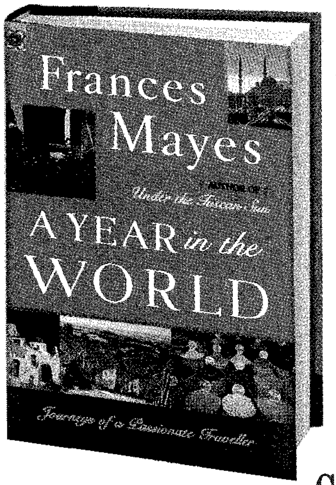
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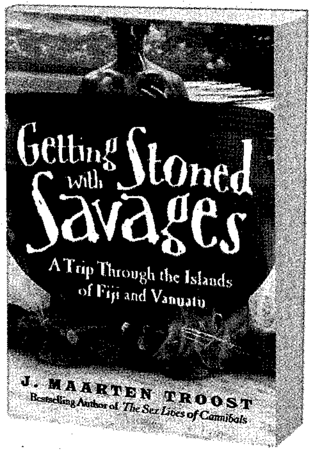
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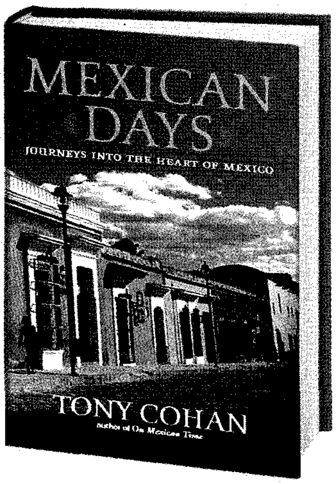
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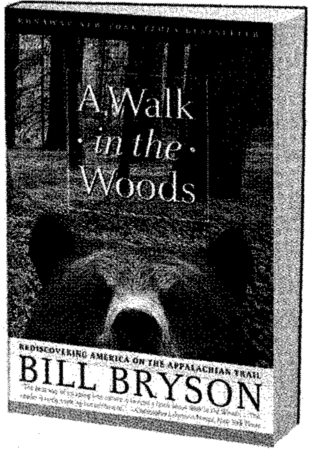
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DISPATCHES FROM IRAQ

SOLDIERS' STORIES

These selections from letters, e-mails, journals, and personal essays, by soldiers, airmen, sailors, and marines who served or are serving in the current war in Iraq, are part of a project sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts called Operation Homecoming, which invited American troops and their families to write about their wartime experiences. The centerpiece of Operation Homecoming was a series of fifty writing workshops, conducted by distinguished American writers, and held at twenty-five military installations here and overseas. Most of the six thousand troops who participated in the workshops had just rotated out of front-line combat. They were told to write freely, without fear of official constraints or oversight. Since Operation Homecoming began, on April 20, 2004, more than ten thousand pages of writing—nonfiction, fiction, and poetry—have been sent to the N.E.A. An anthology of the work, edited by the historian Andrew Carroll, will be published this fall; a TV documentary based on the material will air in 2007; and the entire collection will eventually be housed in an open government archive. (Audio recordings of the soldiers reading, along with their photographs from Iraq, are at NewYorker.com.)

Captain Ryan Kelly, thirty-six, Denver, Colorado. E-mail to his mother, from Camp Buehring, Kuwait. December, 2003.

The worst thing here is not the searing heat or the cold nights. It's the waiting. Waiting for the wind to quit blowing and the sand to quit grinding against your skin. Waiting for a moment of privacy in a tent packed with seventy other men, in a camp packed with seven hundred other tents, in a base packed with fifteen thousand soldiers, all looking for a clean place to go to the bathroom. . . . Waiting for the bone-rattling coughs from dust finer than powdered sugar to stop attacking the lungs. Waiting for the generals to order the battalion to move north, toward Tikrit, where others—Iraqis—are also waiting: waiting for us . . .

A quick look around my tent will show you who is fighting this war. There's Ed, a fifty-eight-year-old grandfather from Delaware. He never complains about his age, but his body does, in aches and creaks and in the slowness of his movements on late nights and cold mornings.

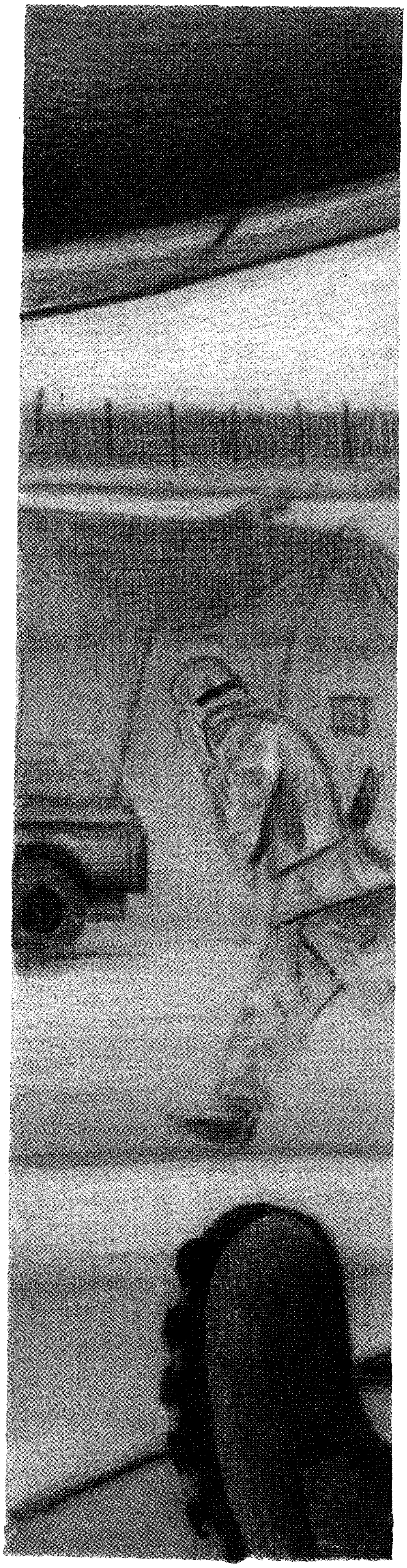
There's Lindon, a thirty-one-year-old, black-as-coal ex-Navy man from Trinidad who speaks every word with a smile. His grandfather owned an animal farm and lived next to his grandmother, who owned an adjacent cocoa field. They met as children.

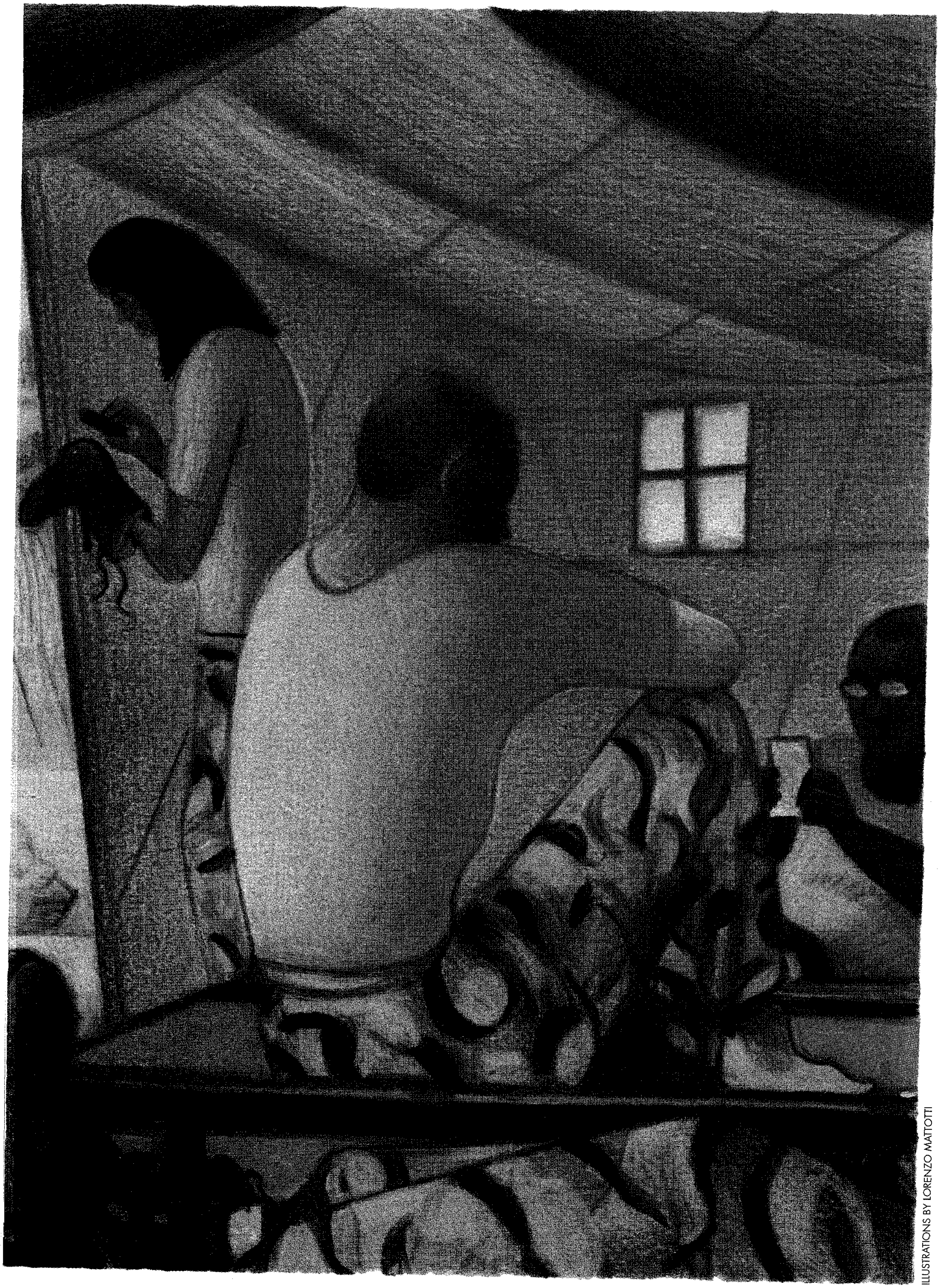
There's Sergeant Lilian, a single mother who left her five-year-old daughter at home with a frail and aging mother because nobody else was there to help.

There's Melissa and Mike, two sergeants who got married inside the Fort Dix chapel a month before we deployed—so in love, yet forbidden, because of fraternization policies, even to hold hands in front of other soldiers. But if you watch them closely, you can catch them stealing secret glances at each other. Sometimes I'll see them sitting together on a box of bottled water tenderly sharing a lunch. They are so focussed on each other that the world seems to dissolve around them. If they were on a picnic in Sheep Meadow in Central Park, instead of here, surrounded by sand and war machines, it would be the same. War's a hell of a way to spend your honeymoon.

There's Sergeant First Class Ernesto, thirty-eight, a professional soldier whose father owns a coffee plantation in Puerto Rico and whose four-year-old daughter cries when he calls.

There's Noah, a twenty-three-year-old motocross stuntman, who wears his hair on the ragged edge of Army regulations. He's been asking me for months





ILLUSTRATIONS BY LORENZO MATTOTTI

to let him ship his motorcycle to the desert. I keep telling him no.

There's Chief Warrant Officer 4 Jerry, the "linedog" of aviation maintenance, whose father was wounded in WWII a month after he arrived in combat. On D Day, a grenade popped up from behind a hedge grove near a Normandy beach and spewed burning white phosphorus all over his body, consigning the man to a cane and special shoes for the rest of his life. C.W.O.4 Jerry lives out on the flight line, going from aircraft to aircraft with his odd bag of tools, like a doctor making house calls. He works so hard that I often have to order him to take a day off.

There's Martina, twenty-two, a jet-black-haired girl, who fled Macedonia with her family to escape the genocide of the civil war in Bosnia. Her family ran away to prevent the draft from snatching up her older brother and consuming him in a war they considered absurd and illegal. A few years later, the family, with no place else to run, watched helplessly as the U.S. flew their daughter into Iraq. She's not even a U.S. citizen, just a foreigner fighting for a foreign country on foreign soil for a foreign cause. She has become one of my best soldiers.

There is William (Wild Bill), a twenty-three-year-old kid from Jersey with a strong chin and a James Dean-like grin. The day before we went on leave, he roared up in front of the barracks and beamed at me from behind the wheel of a gleaming white monster truck that he bought for fifteen hundred dollars. Three days later, he drove it into the heart of Amish country, where the transmission clanked and clattered to a stop. He drank beer all night at some stranger's house, and in the morning sold him the truck. Kicker is, he made it back to post in time for my formation.

There's Top, my First Sergeant, my no-nonsense right-hand man. He's my counsel, my confidant, my friend. He's the top enlisted man in the company, with twenty-eight years in the Army, and would snap his back, and anybody else's, for that matter, for any one of our men. Last year, his pit bull attacked his wife's smaller dog—a terrier of some sort, I think. As she tried to pry them apart, the pit bit off the tip of her ring finger. Top punched the pit bull in the skull and eventually separated the two. A hospital visit and half a pack of cigarettes later, he learned the blow broke his hand. He bought her a new wedding ring in Kuwait.

And on and on and on . . .

I hope you are doing well, Mom. I'm doing my best. For them. For me. For you. I hope it's good enough.

"Today is catch-your-own day."

Commander Edward W. Jewell, M.D., forty-eight, Washington, D.C. Journal entries, hospital ship U.S.N.S. Comfort. March–April, 2003.

March 27. Q: The Comfort is a large non-combat hospital ship protected by the most powerful Navy, Army, and Air Force in history. What is there to be afraid of? A: Everything. Danger is all around us. We are really very close to the action. At times we see oil fires near the shore. However, we cannot really see the combat. We are not afraid of the Iraqi military. If they try to fire a rocket at us it would be easily shot down by artillery on the ground, aircraft, or by naval gunnery/rockets. However, we believe there are mines in the Gulf. Purportedly, small boats have approached the Comfort several times. When this happens we call in a helo and launch our small boat to run them off. How can we possibly see one of these things in the dark? I think it would be very easy for a terrorist to attack this ship with an explosive-laden small boat. Very easy. Would the Iraqis attack a hospital ship if they could? Why not? In their view, they were invaded by mercenary infidels who deserve no better. A surgeon buddy of mine, Mike from Massachusetts, thinks an attack on our ship is a near-given, with a fifty-per-cent chance of success. However, he is a proctologist and a Red Sox fan and naturally pessimistic.

March 28. Sickening sight: a helicopter's downwash blows a stack of letters overboard. Who knows what was lost? Last letter to save a troubled relationship? A fat check? Notice of tax audit? We'll never know. That's war.

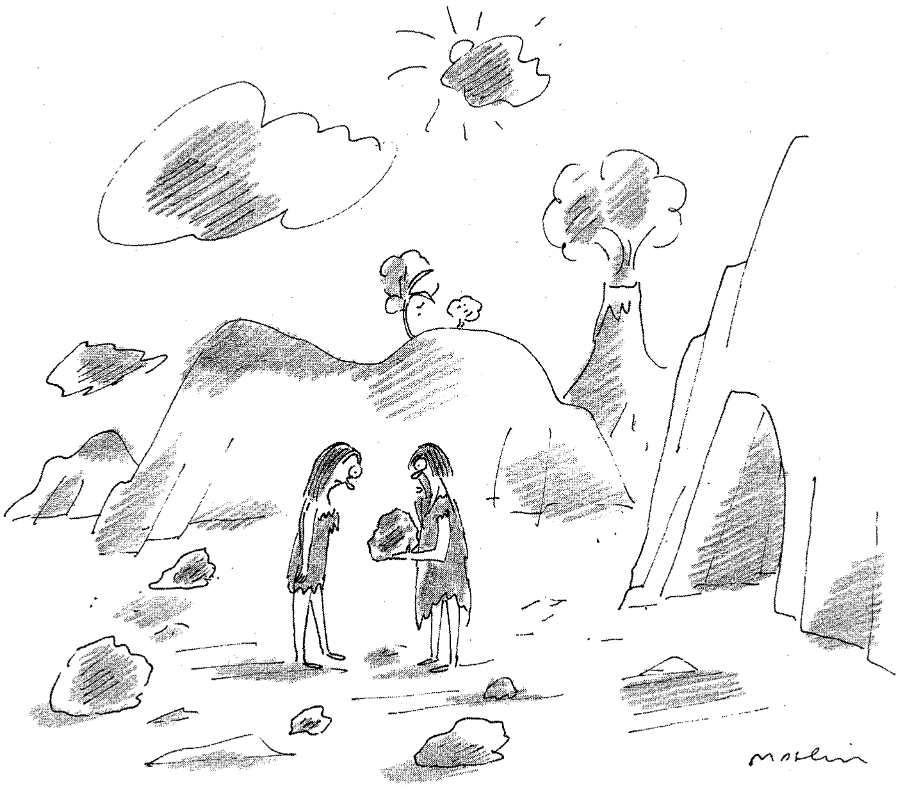
The doctors are all bored from underutilization, but the surgeons seem particularly restless. There are so many of them and not enough cases to fill the time.

The Army helos cannot fly patients out to us in bad weather. The visibility has been poor the last three days, with choppy seas. We were to have received twenty or thirty new patients, but they never made it because of the weather.

March 29. The old Navy jargon

"belay my last," meaning disregard my last statement, applies to my commentary from yesterday. We got creamed with fresh casualties last night, thirty new patients, both sides, all needing immediate and significant intervention. The injuries are horrifying. Ruptured eyeballs. Children missing limbs. Large burns. Genitals and buttocks blown off. Grotesque fractures. Gunshot wounds to the head. Faces blown apart. Paraplegics from spine injuries. The number of X-ray studies performed last night in a short period of time is so great that it causes the entire system to crash under the burden of electronic data it is being fed.

Our patients are mostly Iraqis. Along with their combat wounds, they are dirty, undernourished, and dehydrated. One rumor says that we will treat all the wounded Iraqi E.P.W.s (enemy prisoners of war) for the duration of the war and these are the only patients we will see. If true, this would, in effect, make the Comfort a prison hospital ship. The corpsmen on the wards have to guard the prisoners and keep them from communicating with one another to prevent rebellion. As medical people we are trained to care for the sick; it is difficult to stay mindful that these patients are the enemy and could fight back against us.



"If we save one rock a year, by the time I'm ready to retire we'll have a lot of rocks."

April 5. The Saturday entertainment is karaoke. I usually like it, but tonight it's not for me. The room is hot and crowded, and the whole event just too loud. I step out for air. On deck is a different world. For safety we are on "darken ship" status now. This means no external lights and all windows are covered to block light transmission. The goal is to make the ship invisible or nearly so to evildoers trying to locate the ship in the dark. It does actually work. The night is moonless, skies only a slight haze. It is very dark outside. So dark my eyes need ten minutes to fully accommodate. There is a magnificent display of stars tonight, reminiscent of what you see in Utah. The night has a misty, Impressionist feel. People moving about in the night are just vague dark shapes. Voices are low. Boys and girls being what they are, couples are forming on Comfort. They drift into obscure corners. Ghostlike green blobs of fluorescence rise and fall in the water. Jellyfish. Thousands of jellyfish drift and bob around the ship. I watch the stars until my neck hurts. Someone is singing in the dark in a beautiful, strange language. He tells me it is Hindi, and he is actually practicing for karaoke. I hope he wins.

April 7. The prisoners are kept on a separate ward, deep in the bowels of the ship, for security reasons, and the location is kept obscure. There is concern for the security of the prisoners. Lawyers run everything now, and we actually have a lawyer on board whose primary job is to insure we comply with all tenets of the Geneva Conventions. There are press on board all the time.

Most of the Iraqis show real appreciation for the care rendered them. I would love to talk to them about family, etc., but we have been firmly warned not to do this. The prisoners are a sad lot. I feel for them. Most were not real soldiers, just conscripts forced to fight for the Big Lie, Saddam Hussein. Some of these guys, however, were the feared fedayeen suicide commandos. In general, the prisoners are badly wounded. They look defeated and glad to be out of combat.

April 11. The number of patients coming aboard Comfort is simply out of control. Like the doctors on "M*A*S*H," we have grown to hate the rumble of helos on the flight deck, since it usually means another load of Iraqi patients. Today we received at least thirty-five more patients. New in the last twenty-four hours is a big influx of sick and injured children. We have only one doctor with residency training in pediatrics. Some of the kids are very ill. One was D.O.A. from drinking kerosene. "They" are sending everyone here. We don't know who "they" are, and no one seems to have a handle on where these patients come from, when they are arriving, or who is sending them. We take them all and do our best.

There is no long-term-care plan for all these patients, and the ones who survive will need long-term care. Where will they go? Who will care for them after we leave? We have become deeply involved in a humanitarian crisis that we will not be able to extricate ourselves from.

April 15. Civilian Iraqi patients are

being allowed to move around the ship more (with escorts, of course) as their conditions improve. I saw a teen-ager today smiling and shaking hands with everyone. As he bent to tie his shoe, his sleeve slid up. I saw he had a tattoo on his upper arm. A fresh Marine Corps "globe and anchor." Wow! Hearts and minds, indeed.

April 17. We began in earnest to discharge stable E.P.W. patients from the Comfort. Close to thirty sent back today. Sent somewhere. Sadly, these guys don't realize they are not being repatriated. For security reasons, they cannot be told where they are really going. Looking at these pathetic-looking fellows, it is easy to forget that they were the enemy, and many probably still wish us harm. According to an I.C.U. doctor, one of the most timid-looking teen-age patients is actually an identified terrorist. Another patient awoke from surgery disoriented to place; he asked if he had been sent home to Syria!

April 21. Comfort receives a visit from CENTCOM, the name for the headquarters group for the entire war. A group of their medical-admin bureaucrats, primarily Army, are on board to give us an overview of the medical situation in Iraq and Kuwait. We hope to hear something concrete about our own status: what is planned for us, how can we offload our patients, and, mostly, when can we go home? Instead of insight and clarity, we got more obscuring mud in the eye. The formal presentation is tiresome, trite, and uninformative. It takes fifteen minutes to get the PowerPoint working. The speaker uses too much Army-specific jargon. He admits that the Comfort is the most stable, established, and productive medical unit in the theater. The hospitals in Iraq have been looted and are barely functioning.

A Q&A session follows. The discussion is as overheated as the room. Pointed questions regarding why we got stuck with so many patients go ignored or glossed over. It is explained that the Iraqi casualties were put on helicopters by well-meaning, altruistic U.S. troops, even though they were told not to do this. They offer no explanation for why all the Iraqis ended up in our hospital. They thank us for all our hard work, tell us that they "feel our pain," and say that war is hell. It is not convincing or reassuring to us. These guys all look rested, tanned, and pain-free to us.

Staff Sergeant Parker Gyokeres, thirty, Howell, Michigan. Personal essay drawing on letters to friends and family from Tallil Air Base. November, 2003-March, 2004.

I know a number of you have been curious about what it's like over here, so we are going to take a small mental voyage. First off, we are going to prepare our living area. Go to your vacuum, open the cannister, and pour it all over you, your bed, clothing, and your personal effects. Now roll in it until it's in your eyes, nose, ears, hair, and . . . well, you get the picture. You know it's just perfect when you slap your chest and cough from the dust cloud you kicked up. And, no, there is no escape, trust me. You just get used to it.

O.K., pitch a tent in your driveway, and mark off an area inside it along one wall about six feet by eight (including your bed). Now pack everything you need to live for four months—without Wal-Mart—and move in. Tear down the three walls of your tent seen from the street and you have about as much privacy as I have.

If you really want to make this accurate, bring in a kennel full of pugs; the smell, snoring, and social graces will be just like living with my nine tentmates. Also, you must never speak above a whisper because at all times at least four of your tentmates will be sleeping. That's where the flashlight comes in handy; you are going to use it to navigate a pitch-dark tent, twenty-four hours a day.

Time for hygiene. Walk to the nearest bathroom. In my case, it's a thousand-foot trudge over loose gravel. Ever stagger to the john at 0400? Try it in a frozen rock garden. Given the urges that woke you at this hour, taking the time to put on your thermals and jacket might not be foremost in your mind. But halfway there, it's too late. So dress warmly. It gets really freakin' cold here at night.

I don't even feel like talking about the latrine experience. All I have to say is that, after the first time, I went back to the tent and felt like either crying or lighting myself on fire to remove the filth.

I am somewhat limited in my ability to say how, when, and why we do what we do. Essentially, my unit escorts third-country nationals (T.C.N.s) and local nationals (L.N.s) who work on base. We handle their passes, and we also watch over areas in which they work and, in some cases, live. I currently work in the control center for those escorts and workers. I handle radio traffic and communication between the people coming in, patrols and posts controlling or containing escortees, and the police who search their vehicles. I am nearly always speaking through my Iraqi translator with Iraqis, Koreans, Italians, Dutch, and countless other nationalities while tending to multiple other duties.

In an average exchange, I'll be speaking with an Arabic translator who is speaking pidgin Turkish to a man who is trying to tell me he needs to get in touch with a person whose name he doesn't know, but whom I still need to contact, while some Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, and Filipinos are trying to steal back the knives I confiscated from them, as the Koreans bring fifteen kids in to their hospital for medical attention. Meanwhile, the guy in the corner is making threats against my control team because he is sick of waiting for somebody on the base and the screaming kid just stopped screaming, because he puked on my weapons/contraband searcher who now wants to shoot the Korean escort for letting that sick kid loose. This goes on for twelve hours. Reminds me of a really stressed-out, low-budget version of "ER"—with automatic weapons—in Arabic.

Although things can get chaotic, there are rules that need to be followed. Many of them are ones we've made up on our own.

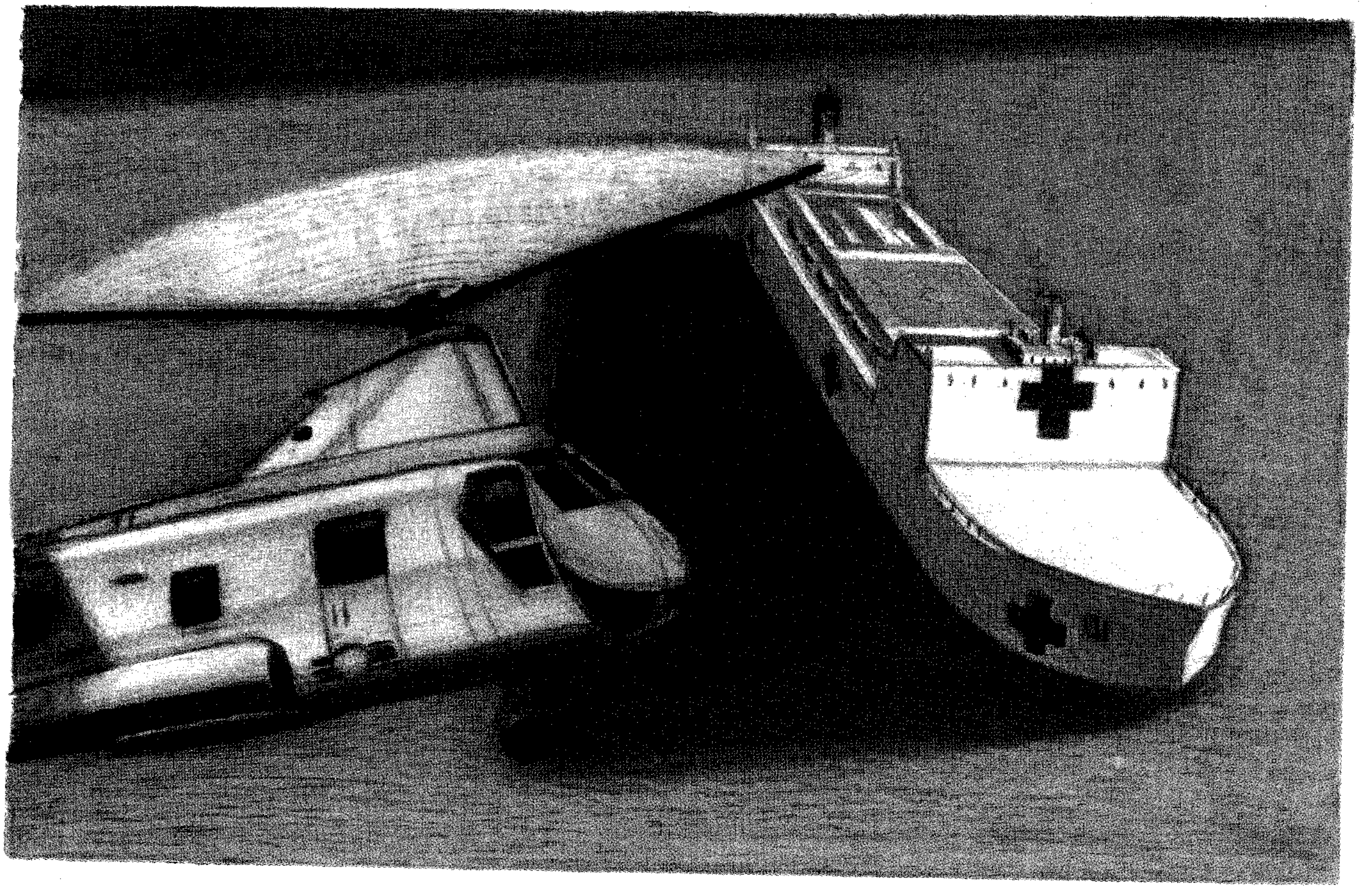
Rule No. 1: Not speaking English is no excuse for being stupid. I think I'm going to get a card that says that in Arabic and flash it to every person who attempts access to our facility. Don't even try "I don't understand" on me, all I asked you to do was sit down and stay there while I work on your issue. I then had to get the interpreter to tell you. Twice. I then had to post one of the troopers on you to babysit. If I have to tell you again, I'm going to kick your butt out and you might be barred entry permanently. And stop asking how long it will be. I told you twice we are waiting on your rep and he will be here when *he* feels like it. Ask me again and I'm going to start yelling.

Rule No. 2: Making me yell will get you in trouble. If you don't stop wandering slowly (like I didn't see you get out of our paddock) toward your truck, I'm going to yell. If you don't get off the cell phone in my yard, now, I'm going to yell. (No weapons, communication devices, cameras at all on base for T.C.N.s or L.N.s, and we mean it.) If you don't tell me about the sharpened tire iron I just found under your floorboard (and don't worry, my guys will find it, I assure you), I won't yell when I take it, but I will yell loudly when you have the stones to ask for it back. You have got to be shitting me. What do you mean to tell me that your sharpened eighteen-inch piece of bent angle iron is a family heirloom? You go. Now.

Rule No. 3: If you don't stop after I tell you once, yell at you twice, and physically attempt to stop you from being terminally stupid or, more to the point, doing something that could be potentially threatening, I'll go the last step, and it always works, regardless of language, nationality, or I.Q. We call it "the exclamation point" or "shacking one." As in: "That damn idiot wouldn't stop, and when he started reaching into his bag again, after I had told him so many times not to, I had to shack one on him."

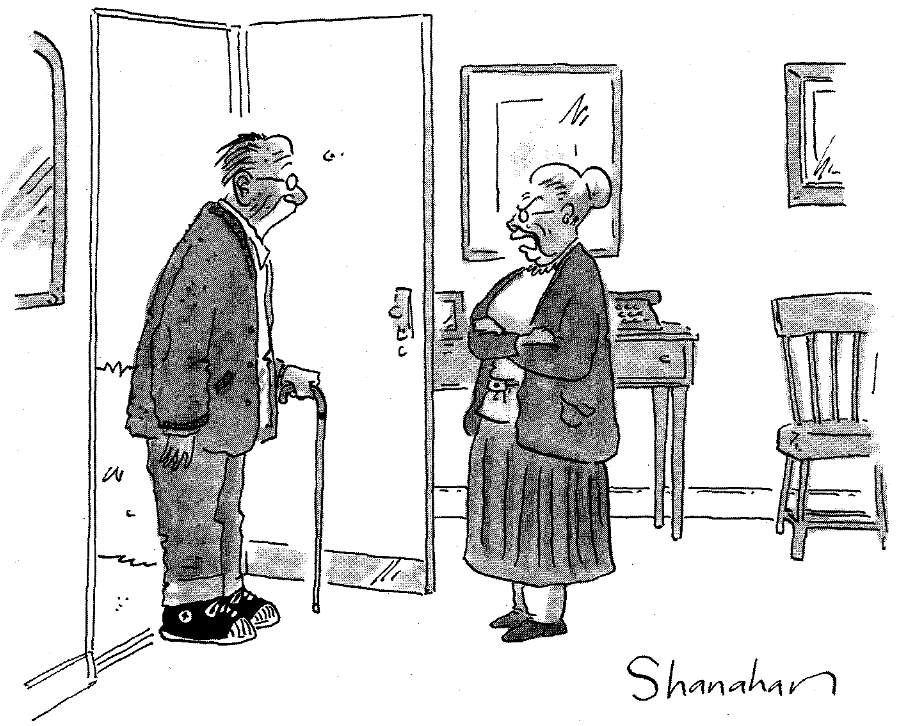
"Shacking one" means you grab your rifle's charging handle and as quickly as possible (to make as much noise as possible) yank back till the handle stops and your fingers break free. As soon as your fingers clear the handle, the spring tension, from the pull, slams the bolt forward and chambers your first round. It sounds like a very quick sliding/slapping *shlack!* It's the loudest metallic noise in the world when it happens. And, for at least three seconds, the only sound you hear, as the crowd unpuckers, is of your own heart trying to break out of its rib cage, one pounding thump at a time. Once you've heard both the noise and its effect, you'll never forget it. I've never had to do it myself (except in training), and, again, it's really for cases when you believe there is a genuine security issue.

Shacking one is the international symbol for "Conversation over." Shacking one tells the individual that this is not a game and we are not going to allow it to continue. From that point, amazingly and without exception, people do what they are told, immediately. They suddenly understand everything we have been trying to tell them. Whaddaya know?



Please don't get the impression that all we do all day is run around and act like Storm Troopers. We all know our guns should never come off our shoulders, and, if they do, that's the very second we need to be calling in the professionals to assist us. The guns are for our self-defense as an absolute last resort. Nothing more. Thankfully, events like these aren't common. Most days pass by smoothly with only funny stories to break up the monotony.

A week ago, for instance, Geraldo



"You schlepped with her, didn't you?"

• •

Rivera came to Tallil to do a report for Fox. As he was going into his shtick, just as the camera zoomed in on his face, a troop in the crowd, positioned just over Geraldo's shoulder and visible only in the midsection, "adjusted himself," on live, national television. In prime time. This is the same troop who got kidney stones, was shipped to Baghdad to have a CT scan, and whose convoy was attacked while he was there. When he came back, the Army doctor informed him that he had two more stones, which he then painfully passed over the next two weeks. If there's a lightning storm, I'm running away from this kid, 'cause he's cursed.

Or blessed, as he's still here, still alive, and didn't lose a stripe after the *Pentagon* called the base commander the next day and wanted to know why reporters in the morning national press briefing were asking about an airman at Tallil A.B. being obscene, live, on prime-time Fox News. The kid had to scratch, for God's sake. He had no idea that the camera was zooming in at that exact moment. And, yes, he's one of my crew, God bless him.

I was just told that today he received a letter of reprimand for (and I quote directly) "an immature, childish, and obscene gesture that intentionally defamed the USAF." Was it bad timing? Yes. Was it bad manners? Probably. But was it, as the reprimand further stated, "a deliberate action, known as a 'package check' "? Ahh—no.

This place truly never ceases to trip me out. Last week I met a man who came through here to visit his wife, who was in hospital. He spoke O.K. English and, it turns out, he was an American citizen, from Dearborn, Michigan. His home was less than ten miles from where I lived before joining up.

I'm standing there in all my body armor, wearing a helmet and holding an assault rifle, looming at least a foot and a half taller and a hundred pounds heavier than he, talking about restaurants in Detroit like an old friend. He told me that eight of his friends from Dearborn have died in the service of the new Iraqi Army in the past few months. I had no idea that so many of those guys were U.S. citizens. He brought his kids in to meet me, and they looked like American kids, in their Spider-Man jackets and Nikes. These kids go to American schools, they watch "SpongeBob," and now they are swatting flies and getting the metal-detector treatment for hidden weapons. I wonder often what they think about all of this.

Captain Donna Kohout, thirty-two, Dillon, Colorado. Letter to members of the Dillon Community Church, from Misawa Air Base, Japan. April, 2003.

I'm still praising God for the opportunity to spend five months in the Middle East both to serve in the largest conflict of our day and to witness the wonders He was working at Prince Sultan Air Base in Saudi Arabia, where I lived. I don't know how to describe the feeling that there was a spiritual element to what we were doing. When I first arrived, I did a double take when I looked at the maps in the back of my Bible and recognized the locations of the cities we were flying over. Tallil had been Ur of the Chaldeans, the birthplace of Abraham, who was the father of the Israelites. When God punished the Israelites with exile from the land that He had given them, they were taken to Babylon, near present-day Al Hillah. This is also where Daniel survived his famed bout in the lions' den. During their years of exile in the Babylonian Empire, the Israelites camped out near Nippur, or the current Al Kut.

I wish I could describe the feeling of flying across what we called the T.E. (Tigris-Euphrates) Line in the months prior to "Night 1" of Operation Iraqi Freedom (O.I.F.). The T.E. Line, which marks the edge of the settled area, is just south of the Euphrates River. South of the line is barren desert. At night, there are no lights there, but to the north bright collections define the towns CNN made famous—Tallil, As Samawah, Basra, Al Kut, Al Amarah, Karbala, and, of course, Baghdad. One clear day, I looked down at the rich greens of the valley between the Tigris and Euphrates and pondered over the fact that these were the Tigris and Euphrates that I'd learned about in church and school my whole life. Genesis describes the Garden of Eden standing at the headwaters of four rivers, two of which are the Tigris and Euphrates. That places the Garden just north of

Basra, within sight of where I flew almost daily.

Abraham, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, the whole displaced Israelite nation, and perhaps even Adam and Eve all trod the ground I was looking down on daily. And I was living in the same desert where the Israelites wandered. We complain about being there for three months—it's so barren, flat, windy, hot, sandy, and dry—it's no wonder the Israelites complained during the forty years that they followed God around the Sinai Peninsula between their exodus from Egypt and their entrance into the Promised Land, near Jerusalem.

In O.I.F., I flew only nights, except for the occasional late-evening or sunrise flight. At night a person can see every bullet and missile launched, near and far away, with the aid of night-vision goggles. Thankfully, most of what the Iraqis shot was unguided and too small to reach the altitudes at which we fly. However, it is still nothing shy of a miracle that given the sheer number of airplanes in the sky, they didn't shoot down a single fighter, bomber, or tanker with all the projectiles they launched over those three weeks.

Praise God for the safety He has provided to so many of us over the last several months. And please continue to pray for the Iraqi people and the soldiers over there now. There is a long and unconventional road ahead of them still.

First Sergeant Richard Acevedo, thirty-eight, Staten Island, New York. Personal essay based on diary entry. June, 2004.

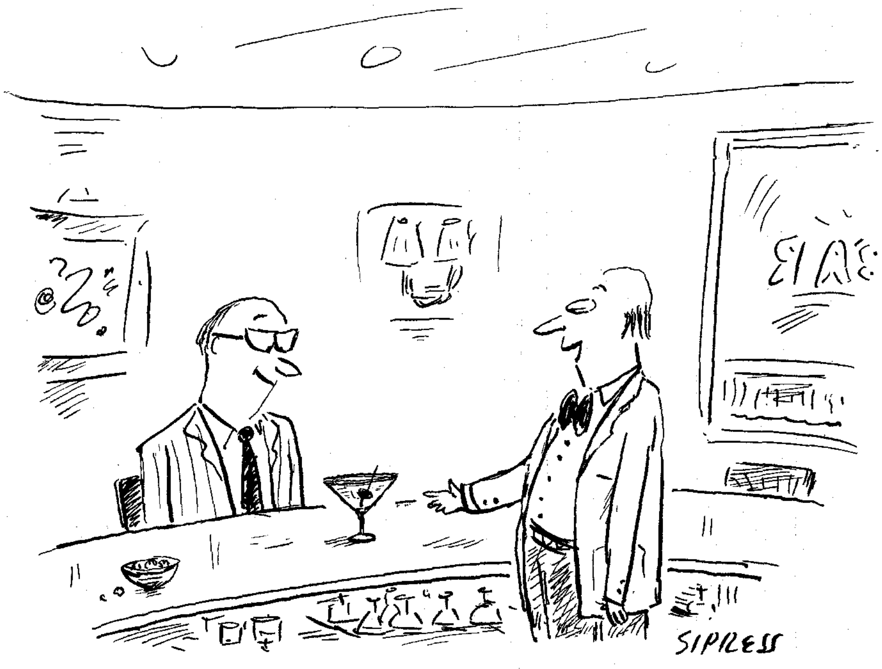
Manuel Ernesto [not his real name] was a soldier assigned to the famous Fighting 69th, a National Guard infantry battalion based out of New York, which is where I call home. The unit has a history of being one of the most decorated outfits in the Army, boasting a lineage that goes all the way back to the Revolutionary War and with a fair number of legends in its ranks. Men like the famed poet Joyce Kilmer; Father Duffy, the Army chaplain whose statue graces Times Square; and "Wild Bill" Donovan, who would go on to start the O.S.S. (Office of Strategic Services), the predecessor to the present-day C.I.A. Today's members of the Fighting 69th are true New Yorkers and come from all walks of life. Manuel Ernesto probably represented that better than anyone.

Perhaps the best way to describe Ernesto is to say that he's a simple man. At the time, he looked to be in his late thirties, though it's hard to tell exactly. He was kind and had a childlike innocence about him, but he had difficulty understanding easy, straightforward tasks and directions. There was also something about him that seemed awkward and out of synch. My many years in the Army have taught me to be a quick study of men, and my initial impression of Ernesto led me to believe that he would not fit in very well within the spartan, testosterone-driven world of the infantry.

We spent four months at Fort Hood, Texas, preparing for our deployment to Iraq. My first real observation of Ernesto in action was during one of our early-morning P.T. sessions. I always started off the day's training with a gruelling workout. I had to get these men in shape and help them shed the pounds that their comfortable civilian lives had packed on them. Combat in Iraq would be unforgiving on these citizen soldiers, and they would have to tote around as much as fifty pounds of gear every day in the brutal hundred-and-twenty-to-hundred-and-thirty-degree summer heat. Usually I began with jumping jacks, and on this one morning as I was jumping along and leading the company, I could hear the men break out into a roar of laughter. I scanned the ranks looking for the reason. Lo and behold, there he was, in the last row, rear left-hand corner of the formation. It was Ernesto, jumping around in spasms of unsynchronized, discombobulated movement. He looked like a fish that had just landed on the deck of a boat, flapping around waiting to be clubbed.

At first, I thought it was an act and began to get angry, thinking he was trying to get laughs during my P.T. session. I watched him for a couple of seconds more and came to the conclusion that this was no act. The harder Ernesto tried to get in synch with everyone else, the worse he looked. One of the guys next to him started to mimic his movements, and instead of Ernesto catching on that he was being mocked, he looked at the prankster with a quizzical expression on his face and shouted to him between labored breaths: "Are you . . . having . . . a hard time . . . with this . . . too?" This caused the whole group to convulse in laughter. That was who Ernesto was.

Days turned to weeks and Ernesto



"Finish every drop—the 5 P.M. cocktail is the most important drink of the day."

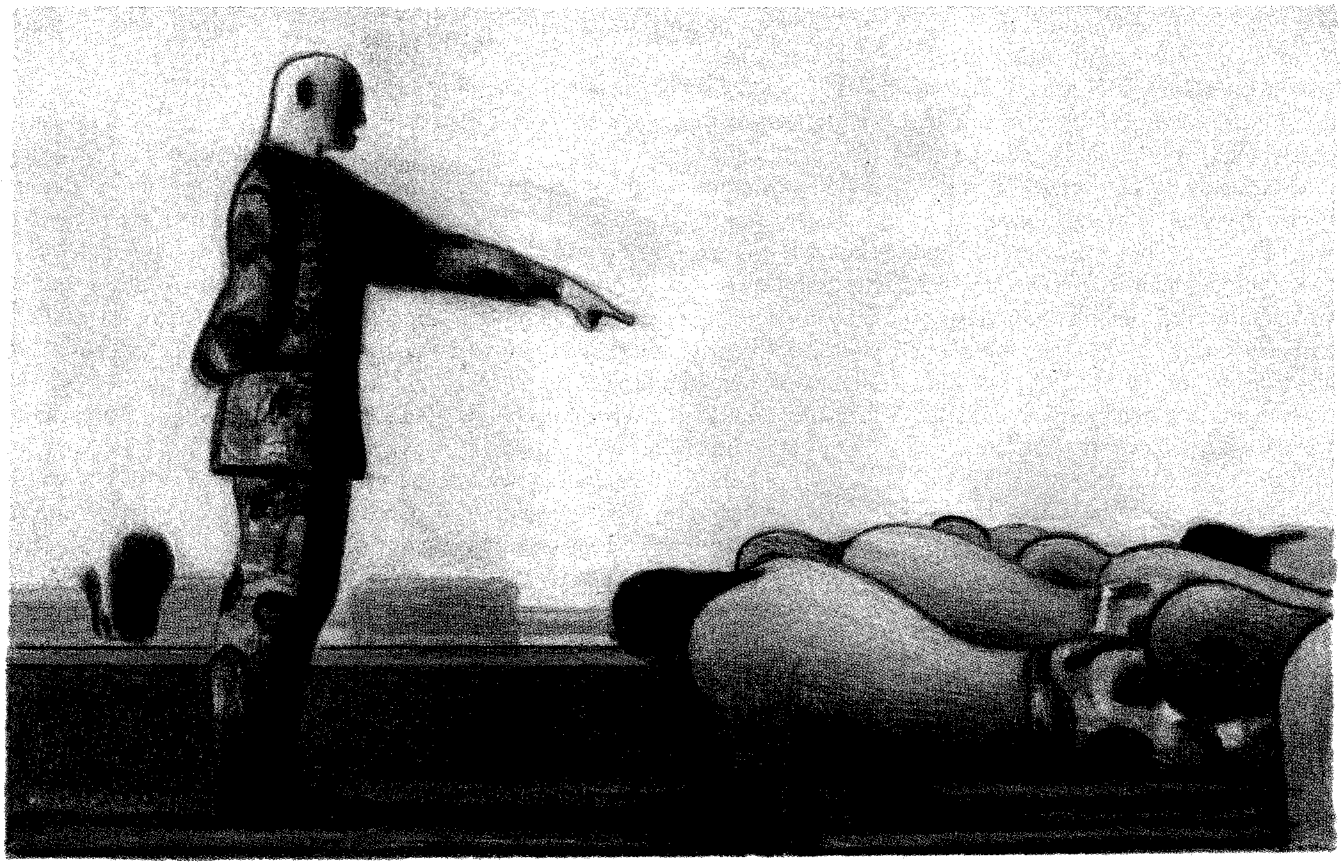
wasn't making any progress. It was time to come up with a game plan for him or he would get himself or someone else killed. I decided one day to have a discussion with our battalion sergeant major in reference to Ernesto. As soon as the topic was broached, the sergeant major began to smile. Ernesto, it turns out, had been in his company some years back when he was a first sergeant. During training, Ernesto started to squirrel away food from the mess tent and keep it in his backpack in anticipation of some unknown impending famine. One day, he took three little containers of milk from that morning's breakfast. Most of the time, the Army's milk is processed in such a way that it has a very long shelf life. But on that day, the mess tent had served fresh milk, and Ernesto, not realizing the difference, stuck the containers of milk in his duffel bag. A few days later, people heard screaming in the middle of the night from somewhere inside the patrol base; Ernesto was on the ground writhing in pain and clutching his stomach in agony. The cause of his illness was consumption of spoiled milk.

After hearing the story, I became angry and asked the sergeant major, "If everyone knew this guy was so screwed up, why was he ever placed in my infantry company for this dangerous deployment?" The sergeant major assured me he would find Ernesto a job as a gofer somewhere safe within the battalion. But there was something else he said that stunned me: Ernesto, prior to this deployment, had been homeless and living in a city shelter. This was why he had been squirreling away the food, and this was why he had been saving the milk; these were habits he had cultivated from being homeless for so long.

A few days later, I was informed that Ernesto would be transferred to the headquarters company to work in their supply room. Essentially, Ernesto would get a job that would not require him to leave the camp to go out on missions. Problem solved, case closed.

Some weeks went by, and, one night while working late in my office, I heard a soft tap on my office door. Ernesto shuffled quietly into my office, shy and apologetic for disturbing me. I told him to come in, sit down, and tell me what was bothering him. He sat down wringing his hands and looking all around my office, studying every nook and cranny and every object in the room.

I gently asked him what was on his mind. He finally looked me in the face timidly and asked if he could come back to the company and be with the men. I was a little surprised by his comment, and I asked him if he was unhappy where he was. He said that the supply sergeant was taking very good care of him and that he liked the work he was doing and the hours he kept.



He had the hardest time looking me in the eye, and I finally told him, as nicely as I could, that I didn't think he was cut out to be an infantry soldier. I don't think Ernesto took this as a surprise, and I felt he knew the truth deep down inside. He quietly stated that he knew the men would be risking their lives soon in combat and that he wanted to be with the men and would do anything he could to help them—even if it meant picking up the dead and filling body bags.

We were weeks away from deploying to Iraq, and the newspapers and cable channels were rampant with stories about people getting their heads cut off, convoys being ambushed on a regular basis, and U.S. service members getting killed by the constant onslaught of bombs hidden on the roads.

I realized that his comment was not just an idle or morbid statement. For all his awkwardness and childlike qualities, Manuel Ernesto showed more compassion for his fellow-soldiers than they ever showed him. I felt ashamed at that moment, especially considering that some men in my company were trying to do everything in their power to get out of going off to fight. Here was Ernesto, a guy who was homeless and shunned by the rest of civilized society, and, in the end, he turned out to have more heart and guts than most.

I told him that if the day ever came when, God forbid, I had to pick up my fallen soldiers, it would be an honor for me if he could help in any way. He smiled and tears welled up in the corners of his eyes. He quietly got up and saluted me in an awkward manner, and I saluted back, not having the heart to tell him that I was a sergeant and only officers get saluted.

Sergeant Timothy J. Gaestel, twenty-two, Austin, Texas. E-mail to his father, from south of Baghdad. September 21, 2003.

Hey, Dad, this is your son. I finally get to write y'all a letter. First off, let me tell you we made it here safe and so far, but everything is going very good. Now, Dad, I know that you have already received a phone call that tells you I am O.K., but I want you to know exactly what happened. . . . We were heading south down Highway 8 and I was gunning for the second truck. Byrd was driving and my chief was the passenger. We got off Highway 8 onto Ambush Alley, the route we didn't take going up there. I was in the back of the truck with my 240B machine gun, and the S2 [an intelligence officer] wanted to ride in the back of the truck with me, since I was the only one back there. We were at the end of the convoy at this point so we were really hauling ass, driving down the wrong side of the road and all that, just so we could get to the front of the convoy. My buddy Eddie was a badass driver and kept us from getting in wrecks a few times. But still able to get the mission done. The X.O. [executive officer] truck was behind us and needed to get in front, not to mention the fact that I had his Gatorade I was supposed to throw to him the next time they passed us.

At that exact moment, a loud and thunderous boom went off and pushed me all the way to the front of where my 240B was mounted. I knew something had just happened and when I turned around I could see two large smoke clouds on each side of the road. The first thing I thought was that I had just been hit in the back by an I.E.D. [improvised explosive device]. It wasn't like I felt as if I was going to die, more like "Man, that really hurt." At that moment, I reached around and felt my back and pulled my hand back, and it was covered with blood. Before that I honestly thought it had just hit my I.B.A. [interceptor body armor]. It turns out that it had hit my I.B.A. and gone right through it.

I lay down in the back of the truck, but this didn't seem like a good idea and I didn't have my weapon and had to yell at the S2 to give me my weapon—I didn't want an ambush to happen and for me to not have my weapon. So I stood up on my knees and yelled again to him to man the 240B; he was scared, but that's what happens when you don't ever get any kind of training and you sit in an office all day. This guy didn't react very well when I showed him my back—he started flipping out and yelling "Oh, G., you got hit man, oh he's hit bad, man." This is the last thing that you tell someone who has just been hit in the back and is bleeding. As you can imagine, I was pretty pissed off at this point, and I showed my anger toward the people in the town that we were driving through, I had my M4 rifle at the ready and my trigger finger on the trigger and was just waiting for someone to give me a reason to have me put it from safe to semi. I maintained my military bearing as well as one could in that situation. I sure wanted to shoot the bastard that had just set the I.E.D. off.

As we were making our way back to the F.O.B. [forward operating base] at that last street, I could no longer sit up straight and my back was killing me. There was a major who was our field surgeon waiting for me in the front of the gate to check me out. This guy didn't reassure me, either. When I told him that I was O.K., he looked at me and said, "Look, son, you may have internal bleeding." Now I was scared. They rushed me to the aid station, where I talked to some sergeant majors and the colonel. In like fifteen minutes, in my brown underwear, green socks up to my knees, and a blanket, I was rushed out to the landing zone where a chopper took me to C.S.H. [Combat Support Hospital] 28, in downtown Baghdad. The flight through Baghdad was amazing, too, you could see the whole city and all the buildings and stuff, it was very strange. The helicopter pilot was a badass as well, he had to do a wartime landing, which is really fast and quick, it was cool. Now, Dad, I hadn't seen a female in twenty-one days, and so you could imagine I was excited when I looked down off the helicopter as we were coming in for a landing to see a very beautiful woman (it could be she was beautiful because I haven't seen a woman in a while). Now when I landed, a female second lieutenant took me into the E.R. with no one else in the whole room except her and me. She came up to me and ripped off my blanket, grabbed my brown undies, and ripped those off too and gave me a catheter. Now that was more painful than the I.E.D. and way not what I was thinking was going to happen when she grabbed my blanket off me. Then she gave me some morphine and I was good.

One thing that bothered me is the way they treated people—just because they're always around stuff like that doesn't mean that they have to act like it's nothing to get hit in the back by a bomb. They did an X-ray of my back and found that I had two pieces of shrapnel in my back. I asked the doctor if I could keep the shrapnel and he said, "Yeah, sure, forever." They weren't going to be taking the shrapnel out. So, yeah, now your son is going to have two pieces of metal in his back for the rest of his life. I was cleaned up and taken to patient hold. A place that is something out of a movie. It was horrible to see all the soldiers with missing legs and arms and bandages everywhere. Shortly afterward, I was given some morphine and I passed out. When I woke up, Colonel Smith, Company Sergeant Major Burgos, Lieutenant Layton, Company Sergeant Major Howard, and our chaplain came in. The first thing Lieutenant Layton said to me was "Well, me and the sergeant major were talking and you are the first person to receive the Purple Heart in the 'Loyalty' battalion since Grenada (in 1983)." It's quite crazy, the turn of events that have led me here. A Purple Heart recipient—I guess all it means is that some guy got me before I could get him. We will joke about this all someday, Dad. I told them I didn't want you all to find out about this because I'm not leaving Iraq and I don't want you to worry. I know you're going to worry anyway but the reason I shared this story here was so you know what it's like to be here and that the people that I'm with all look after one another. I guess it's really crazy that I volunteered to stay even though I was hit in the back with shrapnel, and as soon as I can I'm going to return to my unit. I don't want Mom to worry so don't read her the detailed parts of this letter. I LOVE Y'ALL and will be home soon enough.

Sergeant Tina M. Beller, twenty-nine, Allentown, Pennsylvania. E-mail to her parents, from the Green Zone, Baghdad. September 12, 2004.

RODNEY KREBS
CLASS VALEDICTORIAN OR G.P.A. WHORE?
R. Chast

I am sure by now you can read the news and watch the tube and know that we were severely attacked with a barrage of rockets yesterday morning, your nighttime.

At any rate, I am just writing to let you know that physically I remain unharmed. Emotionally and mentally is a different story. I never would have thought my day would have started out this way.

I was the first responder to a building within our compound that was hit by a rocket. I was driving back into the compound around 0630 from my usual early-morning routine when the hair on my arms stood up. I suspected something was up, but couldn't identify it since I had just arrived from the gym and was too busy praying to Jesus that I hadn't been nailed by a rocket at the palace parking lot, which I had been driving through just moments before.

I saw smoke in the distance and a man waving his arms above him in the universal distress signal. I thought maybe something was on fire from an explosion. From inside the well-padded palace, I never thought that any of the earlier impact rounds I heard were from down here where I lived. I thought it was just the palace being bombarded again. And for certain I never thought we would have taken casualties. Iraqi workers—three.

The first Iraqi casualty I saw came briskly walking down the street toward me. He seemed very alarmed, sort of crazy. I could tell he was in shock. He reminded me of a Ping-Pong ball, walking back and forth, talking, mumbling, although I had no idea who he was speaking to. His mandible was completely shattered inside the structure of his mouth. He made zero sense when he spoke. He just kept giving me sign language over his belly. I think he was trying to tell me someone was pregnant.

I was kind of worried. His head was abnormally larger than the rest of his slender body. The mixture of blood and spit that poured from his mouth looked really weird, like a fountain, a bright-red gurgling fountain. I later discovered he died as well—trauma to his head. Just even typing that—trauma to his head—I should have known he would pass. Yet

I was so hopeful the almighty American soldiers could save him.

His buddy, who sat cross-legged with his back to me in the now demolished living room, was chanting and rocking. I couldn't figure out why he didn't hear me calling for him. I kept saying it to myself, and then I remember speaking out loud to myself as I scratched and pounded through the door that I couldn't budge all the way open, "Why isn't he listening to me, damn it? Why isn't he getting up?" The others say because the rocket blew his eardrum out and the poor guy couldn't hear me. The three of them were probably honoring their first call to prayer at the time when the rocket struck.

I still wonder to this moment, Why the hell didn't I just go in through the front window since it was all blown out, but they tell me not to second-guess my actions or myself. Had I gone through the window, maybe then I would have seen the dead guy, the third casualty, camouflaged with soot and debris.

A Navy SEAL, a medic, just happened to be walking by after his shift at the Combat Support Hospital E.R. He took over for me, obviously, since he was much more qualified than I. He really did all the work, not me. I just ran for help, got an ambulance, and then at 0635 in the morning, I started screaming for help. "Medic, medic! I need a medic!"

The weirdest thing of all was the absolute evil feeling that hit my body when I tried to bust through the door the first time, when I was alone with the casualties, before the Navy SEAL came. It actually stopped me in my tracks. The Iraqi behind me kept nudging me in the doorway, but my legs were glued to the ground. A Vietnam veteran here with us explained to me last night what I felt was the presence of death. And my body didn't like it.

The general's driver showed up with a vehicle, and we put them in the Yukon and he made like a bandit for the C.S.H. I never did find out who came for the deceased. After somebody told me I was full of blood, I kind of thought I should go home and shower and get prepared for the next barrage of attacks. And without fail, they came, too.

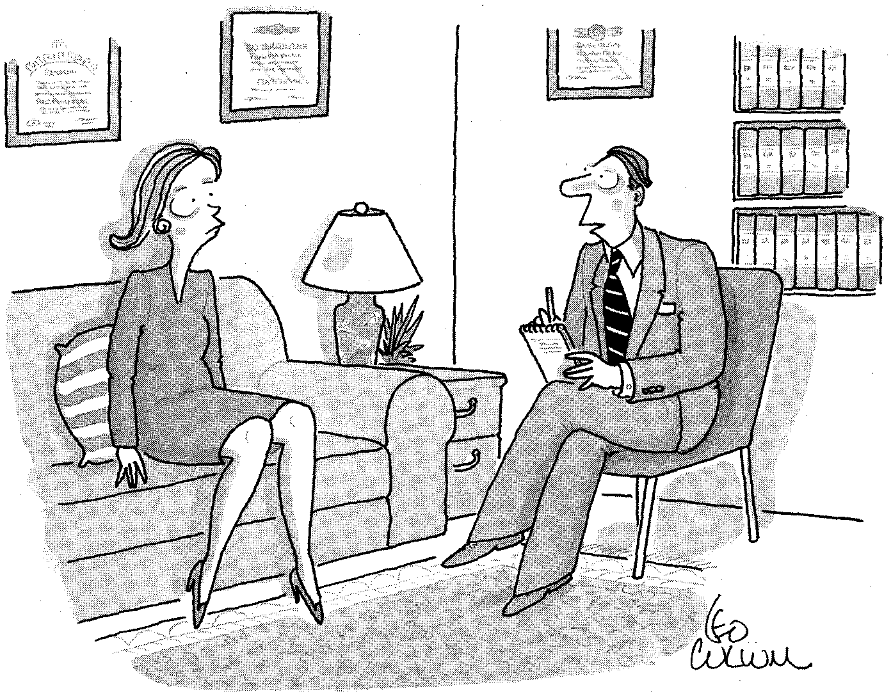
They hit while I was in the shower. I had been fine until this time, not really reacting to what I had just seen and the little run I took to call for an ambulance. And that's when I went into shock myself, or I did what they say is called coming down off the adrenaline high. It was all I could do to keep my little legs strong, but I finally just gave in to the little trembles and just sat down in the shower and cried. A few moments before, I had realized that I had now washed my body two times and didn't know why the first time wasn't good enough. . . .

I made it back to my room after a long heaving cry and began to dress in my uniform. They found me in my room cleaning my weapon, yet I was shaking so bad I couldn't assemble my bolt and charging handle together correctly. I realized I needed to chill before I was going to defend us anywhere.

Since the attack, I have gone back once to see the area that was just barely lit. Partial brain remains from the deceased are still on the cement floor, except now they are pinkish with cement gristle all folded into them, and oven-baked from the sun. Somebody tried to be discreet, but did a poor job in covering it up. The gate that was once there is all blown to hell. They have cheap yellow police tape around the place. Yeah, as if that's going to keep people out.

I found several pairs of men's sandals that were just blown about like they were nothing. And of course, pools of blood, some dark and brown, some still red and fresh, reminded me of the tragedy that occurred earlier that morning. I saw the pile of rocks that I tripped over in the morning dusk and chaos because I was trying to run and thought I was lighter than air, I guess. I saw the door that I couldn't bust through. I was glad to see somebody had. Upon later inspection of the attacked house, we found out the object behind the door was the remnants of the rocket. No wonder I couldn't get through. I saw all the cans of fresh paint that were stacked outside the building. The Koreans had hired these three Iraqi men to fix up the place for the Korean Embassy to move in. Guess the Koreans are going real-estate shopping, huh?

But most of all, the veterans I spoke to last night told me I will probably smell paint sometime in the future, and



"Your innermost feelings are fascinating, but, remember, I'm your attorney."

• •

it will remind me of this day, this horrible event. They also told me it wasn't my fault, and I couldn't have saved them since their injuries were far too great for my little hands. From what they had heard, I had done the right thing, the honorable thing. "Geez, Beller, you didn't run back to your room and hide like a lot of them did," said one of our senior sergeants, a Vietnam veteran himself. "Just remember this, next time somebody comes up to you like they did today, asking you about your story in disbelief, you look at them and ask them with a stone-cold face, 'Were you there? Then how would you really know what happened?' "

Captain Ryan Kelly. Letter to his mother, from Camp Speicher, Iraq. 2003.

It's the body bag in the back that makes the flight hard. No jovial banter among the crew. No jokes of home. No wisecracks about the origin of the meat served at the chow hall, just the noise of the flight—the scream of the engines, the whir of the blades clawing at the air, the voice crackling over the radio and echo of your own thoughts about the boy in the bag in the back.

Yesterday I was in the T.O.C. (Tactical Operations Center)—it's where all the mission planning happens, briefings, maps on the wall, etc. Normally, after flying missions, pilots drift around the T.O.C. with an air of satisfied indifference—similar to lions after devouring a zebra. I was talking with the operations officer, complaining that my pilots weren't flying enough, when a heavyset, three-pieces-of-cake-after-dinner man came in. Instead of the usual swagger, he was dazed. I asked him what was wrong. He told me he just finished flying one of the "hero" missions. When we pick up friendly K.I.A.s (killed in action), that is what we call it.

He told me he picked up a U.S. kid killed in a car bomb. He tried to shrug it off as just another mission, but it was obviously bothering him. A few seconds later, he left, but his look stayed with me.

Body bags must have been in the stars because later the colonel announced that the heaters in the medevac helicopters were not working that well. In response, the medics, operating on a "corn-husk theory," started zipping their live patients inside body bags to keep them warm during the flight. It can get very cold in the back of a Black Hawk because the wind seeps in through cracks in the window seals. However, the medics forgot to explain this to their patients, who understandably freaked out. It's kind of funny, in a twisted sort of way: I guess being in a body bag is better than freezing on the way to the hospital. Why is death always so cold?

Things have hardened into routine here, like an old artery that's carried the same, tired blood along the same, tired path for years. Pump, return, pump, return, wake up, eat, work, sleep, wake up—back and forth, back and forth, *boom!* Rocket attack. Pump, return, pump, return . . . We've worn a trail through the gravel with our boots plodding back and forth to the hangar.

If it weren't for the Army uniforms and the constant noise of helicopters taking off and landing, and the Russian 747-like jets screaming overhead every hour of the day, and the F-16s screeching around looking for something to kill, and the rockets exploding and the controlled blasts shaking the windows and the *thump, thump, thump* sound of the Apache gunships shooting their 30mm. guns in the middle of the night, and the heat and the cold, and the hero missions and the body bags and the stress, and the soldiers fraught with personal problems—child-custody battles fought from nine thousand miles away, surgeries on ovaries, hearts, breasts, and brains, cancers, transplants, divorces, Dear John letters, births, deaths, miscarriages, and mismarriages—and the scorpions and the spiders who hide under the toilet seats, and the freakish bee-size flies humming around like miniature blimps, and the worst: the constant pang of home, the longing for family, the knowledge that life is rolling past you like an unstoppable freight train, an inevitable force, reinforcing the desire for something familiar, the longing for something beautiful, for something safe, to be somewhere safe, with love and laughter and poetry and cold lemonade and clean sheets—if it weren't for all that, Iraq would be just like home. Almost.

This morning I went to work and found a V.F.W. magazine on the conference table. On the front cover was a picture of an injured twenty-something soldier, his face and forehead purpled with bruises, his lips swollen and cut, his left eye half closed, his arm in a sling, fingernails black with dried blood, his thighs blotched with red abrasions and his leg wrapped in an ace bandage, amputated below the knee. He was sitting in a hospital bed with a half smile on his face. A blazing bold-yellow headline scrawled across his chest read "Wounded Vets Rebound." I opened the magazine and flipped to the story and saw a second picture of a wounded amputee. This one was of a young Navy guy lying in a hospital bed. His wife was sitting beside him. She was not smiling.

The caption under the picture read, "Navy Corpsman Joe Worley visits with his wife, Angel, while recovering at Walter Reed. A rocket-propelled grenade ripped off his left leg, but he said it was 'a fair trade for getting out of Iraq alive.' " The cutline continued, "Worley's sense of humor and positive outlook make him a favorite on the amputee ward."

Christ. What a terrible attempt at positive spin.

Captain Ed Hrivnak, thirty-four, Spanaway, Washington, member of a medevac crew. Journal. March-July, 2003.

First Mission: Our patient load is 11-7+2 and a duty passenger. That means eleven litter patients, seven walking wounded, and two attendants. Some can take care of themselves, some need lots of help. All have been waiting for us for a long time and need pain medicine and antibiotics. The patients include: G.S.W. (gunshot wound) to the stomach, partial amputations from a land mine, open fractures secondary to G.S.W., head injury/struck by a tank, blast injuries, shrapnel injuries, and dislocations. The patients are mainly from the Marines and 101st Airborne (Screaming Eagles). Many were involved in ambushes.

One trooper confides in me that he witnessed some Iraqi children get run over by a convoy. He was in the convoy and they had strict orders not to stop. If a vehicle stops, it is isolated and an inviting target for a rocket-propelled grenade. He tells me that some women and

LIFE DURING WARTIME

YUGOSLAVIA, 1991

EMMANUEL GUIBERT

In February, 1991, I got an editorial job with the magazine *Naši Dani* (*Our Days*), and instantly left my parents' house, where I had, embarrassingly, lived until the age of twenty-seven. I rented a place in the Sarajevo neighborhood of Kovači with Davor and Pedja, two friends who also worked for *Naši Dani*. Our previous experience was in radio, so we had to learn quickly how to bring a jolt of immediacy to a biweekly magazine. Alas, we soon had a chance: one of our first issues was devoted largely to the demonstrations in Belgrade, which Slobodan Milosevic crushed with tanks. It was the first blood spilled by the Yugoslav People's Army, and we knew that the flow would not stop there. By spring, the war in Croatia was well on its way. We received reports of atrocities; we published photos of decapitated corpses, and an interview with a Serbian militia leader, now awaiting trial in The Hague, who once promised to gouge out Croatian eyes with rusty spoons—as though regular spoons were not bad enough. At first, such horrors could be treated as exceptions to the rules by which we lived our lives, particularly since the Yugoslav-Serbian and Croatian authorities kept promising that everything would return to normal. But we soon began reporting on Army trucks transporting arms (their cargo officially registered as "bananas") to the parts of Bosnia where Serbs were the majority. We covered parliament sessions and attended press conferences at which Radovan Karadzic and his henchmen made not so veiled threats. Everyone but us was preparing for an all-out war.

The more we knew, the less we wanted to know. Convinced that we were merely trying to live our lives normally, we embarked on a passionate pursuit of hedonistic oblivion. We danced a lot. We dropped enormous amounts of money into slot machines, which were rigged so as to preclude even a statistical possibility of our winning. One of my favorite methods of denial was to get stoned and watch Vincente Minnelli's "Gigi," often bellowing along ("Gigi, am I a fool without a mind or have I really been too blind"). Pedja and I got drunk and crooned along with Dean Martin, one of the great practitioners of international hedonism. We spent one splendid spring Saturday in our garden, devouring spit-roasted lamb and smoking superb hashish, until we were so high we would have floated away like balloons had we not been ballasted with the meat.

And then there was rampant, ecstatic promiscuity. The whole institution of dating seemed indefinitely suspended; it was no longer necessary to go out before hopping into bed. A few exchanged glances were sufficient to arrange intercourse. Indeed, there was no need for a bed: hallways, park benches, the back seats of cars, bathtubs, and floors were just fine. There was no time for relationships on our Titanic. Those days of disaster euphoria were a great fucking time, for nothing enhances pleasures and blocks guilt like a looming cataclysm.

By late May, however, it had become difficult to maintain this state of hysterical oblivion. A dealer we'd used as a source for a story on the Sarajevo drug market had gone home to Croatia, got conscripted, and then called us, somehow, from the front line, leaving a frenzied message: "You cannot imagine what is happening here!" He didn't leave his number in the trenches, and I don't think we would have called him if he had. Then Pedja went to report from the front, only to be arrested and tortured by Croatian forces. After his release, he moped around for days, his bruises slowly changing from deep blue to shallow yellow. Finally, I sat him down, pushed a tape recorder in front of his face, and made him tell me about his experience: the humiliatingly stupid good-cop, bad-cop routine, the twisted testicles, the gun in his mouth, etc. When he finished, I ritualistically handed the tape over to him and said, "Now put it away and let's move on."

But there was nowhere to go. In July, I quit my job and went to Ukraine, just in time for the August putsch, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the subsequent declaration of Ukrainian independence. When I came home in early September, Sarajevo was deflated, the euphoria exhausted. One night, I went to the Olympic Museum café, where my friends and I had often hung out, and watched glassy-eyed people stare into the distance, barely speaking, some of them drugged, some of them naturally paralyzed, all of them terrified by what was now undeniable: the war had arrived, and we were just waiting for death. Soon, that war assumed positions in the mountains around the city. By the time the siege started, I was in Chicago, dealing with the American version of oblivion. But that is another story.

—*Aleksandar Hemon*

children have been forced out onto the road to break up the convoys so that the Iraqi irregulars can get a clear shot. But the convoys do not stop. He tells me that dealing with that image is worse than the pain of his injury.

Back in Germany, the patients are offloaded and we clean up our mess. Then a sergeant comes out and declares that we have to sign a paper stating we will not drink and drive in Germany. We look at him with anger. Our mission from start to finish was twenty-nine hours long. Most of us were up twelve hours prior to that, minus catnaps. Forty-one hours later and someone in peaceful Germany is worried we might drink and drive.

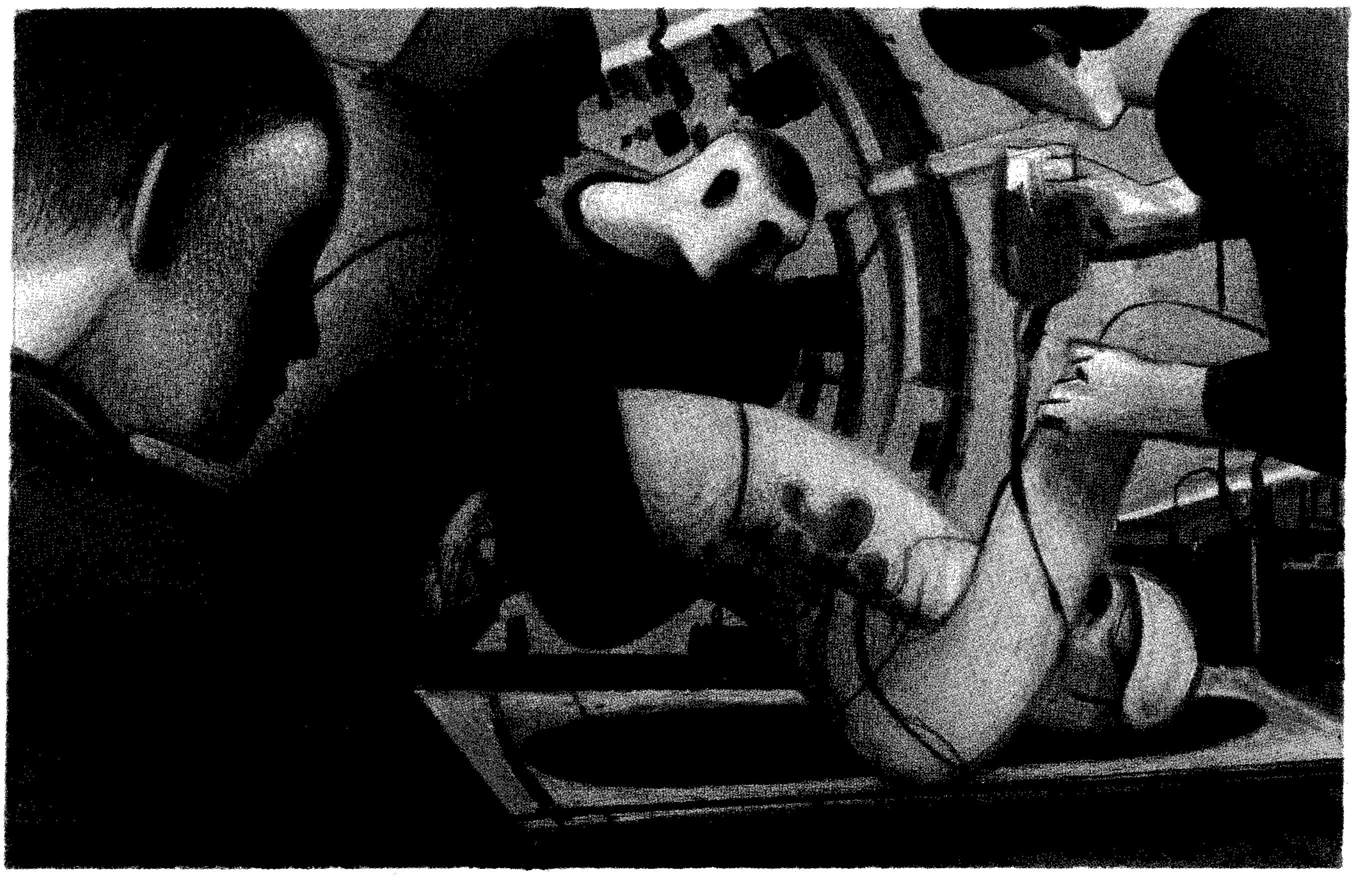
The field where we picked up the patients, we find out later, came under rocket attack six times after we left.

Easter Day: Some come onto the plane with the thousand-yard stare. Some come on with eyes darting about assessing the new environment, maybe looking for an ambush or a booby trap. Some walk with a nervous jitter, some walk on like zombies. Some have eyes glazed over from a morphine-induced stupor. Once we are at cruising altitude, you can feel the tension drop within the aircraft.

I thought I was doing a decent job at nursing, when my medical crew discovered a cure-all on our Easter Day mission. We had collected money at our staging base and bought frozen pizzas and cookie dough. Halfway through the flight we started cooking the pizzas. I walked from patient to patient and asked them if they would like a pizza. There were many looks of disbelief. These boys had seen nothing but M.R.E.s (field rations) for more than three months. Then the smell of pizza started to drift from our aircraft ovens. (We have five small convection ovens on the plane.)

Our crew passed out the pizza. The boys did not look like combat veterans anymore. Most of them had gleeful looks like young children at an Easter-egg hunt. It was like we just gave them a little taste of home and America. They started to joke and laugh with each other. After the pizza we brought out the fresh-baked cookies (which takes a little skill in a pressurized cabin). The cookies were hot and dripping chocolate. I weaved between the seats and litter stanchions and let the boys grab the gooey cookies. You should have seen the looks on their faces.

A Mission to Baghdad: We were in bravo alert and had been told that not much was going on. A crewmate and I were passing the time in our room watching "BBC World News" when a newsflash came on describing multiple ambushes and firefights around Baghdad. Several hours later, we were alerted for an urgent mission to that very place. We ended up loading thirty-eight patients, the majority of them combat injuries. The worst patient assigned to me was a Ranger who was nineteen years old, but looked to be about fifteen. He was on the litter prone, facing the two critical patients. His arms dangled over the side of the litter. As I walked by, he reached up and grabbed my calf with his left arm. He was loaded with morphine and difficult to understand. He was rambling, "Take care of my buddies . . . Take care of my buddies, don't worry about me and are they going to be O.K.? Are they going to



live?" The critical patients he was facing were his friends. When we loaded the patients, we had no time to take into consideration their relationships to one another. He was looking directly at his buddies while the CCATTs (critical-care air-transport teams) worked desperately to keep them alive.

I went over to the CCATT nurse and asked him how the friends were doing. He told me, "I got one guy who is shot through the neck and is paralyzed. The other guy has multiple shrapnel wounds and a severe brain injury. These guys are messed up. I hope they killed the fuckers that did this."

Halfway home, I looked up to see the prone Ranger waving for help. He was in pain. I gave him a touch of morphine. As I leaned into him, he lamented about his friends again. I told him they were still alive. He then vomited on me. It was the perfect capper to an arduous flight. I have no memory of the patient offloads—I was on autopilot at that point. We got into crew rest midday and I had disturbing dreams.

Faces of War: The Humvee is like the Pinto of the nineteen-seventies: it burns quickly when hit by a rocket. One G.I. told me he saw a Humvee burn down in less than three minutes. You can't get out of the vehicle fast enough when it is hit. I was transporting a medical officer who was stuck in such a situation. He was hauling medical supplies to Iraqi civilian hospitals when they were ambushed by an R.P.G. He was burned on most of his upper body and face. The tops of his ears were burned off. His arms and hands were covered in heavy bandages, and ointment covered his red, peeling face. I sat and talked with him as we waited for an ambulance. This officer was prior enlisted, married, and has three children. He decided to become a medical officer to provide better for his family and to get out of the field. He told his family not to worry about him, because he would be serving in the rear with medical logistics. He would not be fighting on the front lines. (Where are the front lines in Iraq?)

He was not concerned about his burns, but he was worried about what his children were thinking. He said, "I talked to them on the phone yesterday. They didn't understand why I was burned. I promised them I was going to be O.K.—that I would be safe. The kids don't get it and I'm not sure how to explain it to them." I stared at his face and burns the whole time he was talking. His face was an expressionless mask. I couldn't tell if he was tired like the rest of the patients or if the burns were causing his unvaried, mask-like appearance. The tone of his voice when speaking of his children was his only sign of emotion.

Battle Buddies: These marines and soldiers are good at waiting. They see we are doing our best and rarely complain. One soldier, trying to be patient, went too long between morphine shots. He tried to gut it out. He did not want to slow the loading of the airplane. We loaded him on the bottom rack and he immediately grabbed onto the litter above him. I looked down at him and saw his knuckles turn white, with a death grip on the litter crossbeam. Tears poured down his face but he did not make a sound. I grabbed the primary flight nurse and told him to give this kid some of the good stuff. The nurse said he would get the morphine when we were done loading the rest of the litter patients.

I can't blame this nurse. It was his first real casualty mission in the war. It is easy to lose sight of one patient and get caught up in what is going on around you. I told the nurse to toss me a syringe of morphine and I would take care of him myself. When I returned to this G.I., a battle buddy was holding his hand and talking softly to him. Their hands were locked like they were ready to arm-wrestle. I quickly pushed the morphine into his vein and apologized for letting his pain get to such a level. I felt like I had failed him. His buddy stayed with him, talking to him, consoling him, until the pain medicine took effect and the soldier's hand relaxed. These two were not in the same unit. They were not wounded in the same part of Iraq. They were brought together and bonded by their wounds. Their injuries made them part of a fraternity, a private brotherhood I felt privileged to witness.

Captain Lisa R. Blackman, thirty-two, Chelmsford, Massachusetts, serving as a clinical psychologist. E-mails to friends and family, from Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar. October, 2004.

A quick word on guilt. No one ever feels like they are doing enough. If you are in a safe location, you feel guilty that your friends are getting shot at and you aren't. If you are getting shot at, you feel guilty if your buddy gets hit and you don't. If you get shot at but don't die, you feel guilty that you lived, and more guilty if you get to go home and your friends have to stay behind. I have not seen one person out here who didn't check off "increased guilt" on our intake form. . . .

Lately I have had a string of combat-trauma evaluations. Several have been Army troops passing through for R. and R.—they come here for a bit and then go back to Iraq or Afghanistan. As if this is a glamorous vacation site. But they are grateful to be someplace safe (and someplace with alcohol, which I will surely complain about at a later date). Anyway, each one presented with a different complaint. One guy wasn't sleeping, one gal was angry about "sexual harassment" in her unit, one gal was depressed, one guy just wanted to go home. Standard stuff.

I had no initial clue that the problems were combat-related and no idea that I should be assessing for acute stress disorder or P.T.S.D. None of these guys or gals said "I was in combat" or "I saw someone die." None connected these experiences to their symptoms. It was as if they didn't remember how hard and unusual it is to be at war. They're used to the danger. They've been out here too long. Why would a war mess with your mood, right?

Each evaluation started with the typical questions: "What brought you in today?" "When did the problem start?" "Have you ever experienced these symptoms before?" "How's your sleep?" etc., etc., etc. I kept asking questions and thinking that the symptoms did not add up. Something wasn't right. I wasn't getting the right reactions. Stories were incomplete. Affect was blunted. Level of distress did not match presenting complaint. Alarm red, people, alarm red.

At home I ask people if they have ever experienced or witnessed a traumatic event or abuse. But out here I ask, "Have you ever been in combat?" Apparently, this is a question with the power to unglue, because all four of

these troops burst into tears at the mention of the word "combat."

And when I say burst, I mean splatter—tears running, snot flowing, and I literally had to mop my floor after one two-hour session. In other words, I mean sobbing for minutes on end, unable to speak, flat-out grief by an otherwise healthy, strong, manly guy who watches football on the weekends and never puts the toilet seat down.

Each time, I sit there with not a clue what to say . . . offering tissues . . . saying I'm sorry . . . trying to normalize . . . trying to say, "It was not your fault that so-and-so died" and "If you could have done differently, you would have" and "You had a right to be scared." And, even worse, "You had to shoot back," and "Yes, you killed someone, and you still deserve to go back to your family and live your life."

Next time you are hanging out with a friend, think about what you would do if he turned to you and said, "My boss made me kill someone, and I know I'm going to Hell for it, so why bother?" What would you say to "normalize" that?

I will probably never see these folks again. I have no idea if I have been helpful. Maybe I planted a seed of reprieve that will grow into self-forgiveness. Maybe I did absolutely nothing but sit here. Who knows?

I can't stop thinking about the fact that these folks have lost something that they will never get back—innocence (and a life free of guilt). My heart hurts for them.

Second Lieutenant Brian Humphreys, thirty-two, Santa Barbara, California. Journal, Hit, Iraq. February-September, 2004.

Bang, bang, bang. The sheet-metal door amplifies the sound of the large fist striking it. Sergeant Graham is standing in the doorway, silhouetted by the white-hot afternoon sunlight.

"Sir, we have a unit in contact, two friendly K.I.A. The platoon is getting ready downstairs."

I throw my uniform and flak jacket on, grab my rifle, and head down a flight of stairs. The platoon is already on the vehicles, ready to roll with an ambulance.

The palm groves to our east that line the Euphrates River whip by. To the west of the asphalt ribbon are the scorched wadis used by insurgents to stage their attacks. Up ahead I see the telltale cluster of Humvees and marines. I pull up to the first vehicle and find the patrol leader.

"Where do you want the ambulance?" I ask.

"Just have it pull up, we'll guide it in," he replies, as if we have arrived to help fix a flat tire. The ambulance in the middle of my six-vehicle column pulls forward, and I get out to find where the casualties are.

"What the hell is that?" I ask a marine. Perhaps the explosion had somehow killed a farm animal of some sort who wandered out on the road. A sheep maybe? Or a cow. No, not big enough. Well, what is that and how did it happen? The marine gives his buddy's name and asks me to help find his head. Fuck.

We do not want the stray dogs that occupy Iraq with us to find our brothers. The corpsmen, with their blue latex gloves and body bags, scour the bushes for the last scraps of human tissue as waves of heat rise from the desert. The Associated Press dutifully reports that three marines were killed in Al Anbar province in Iraq. Names have not been released by the Defense Department pending notification of next of kin. We will not read the two-sentence notice for several days. The Internet room is always padlocked while we wait for somebody to get a knock on the door half a world away.

At one point the casualties got so bad that it seemed the room was closed for a week at a time while notifications were made. Iraq is coming apart at the seams. Pictures of flag-draped coffins being unloaded from Air Force transports surface on the back reaches of the Internet, as if they were a grainy celebrity sex video that decent people should avoid looking at. But I think otherwise. The images of flag-draped coffins show the end of war as we are meant to see it, and as we are meant to believe it. Uniforms, flags, patriotism, honor, sacrifice. In these images we are not street fighters struggling to survive and kill in a distant gangland but soldiers in the nation's service. They will help the families, I think. They will help us. In our own way, we, too, need to believe.

Today, the marines will have to wait to log on to their chat rooms, HotOrNot.com, MilitarySingles.com, and the online shopping sites. I myself have become something of a spendthrift in Iraq, ordering more books and CDs than I normally would. I have seen death enough times among people who had been indestructibly living only the day before. It is better to go ahead and buy the CD you have been meaning to get. There are reminders wherever you care to look. For instance, the pile of blood-soaked flak jackets sitting in the company's combat operations center, a low-tech jumble of maps and radios. The flak jackets' owners are either dead or in the hospital recovering from their wounds.

The executive officer reminds us that the flak jackets need to be sent back through the Marine Corps's supply chain as soon as possible. Somewhere, somebody will wash them and inspect them for damage, filling out all the necessary paperwork. It is the banality, even more than the carnage, that shocks. Our occupation grinds on. Others will assign meaning to our lives here, noble or otherwise. For us, though, there is a close meanness to the fight. There are no flags, no dress uniforms. We are fighting a rival gang for the same turf, while the neighborhood residents cower and wait to see whose side they should come out on.

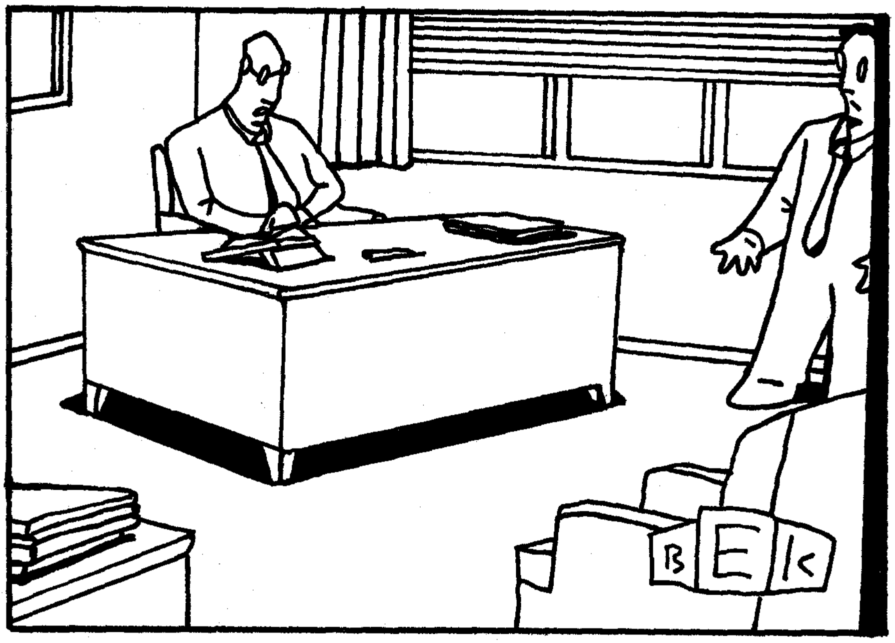
Imperceptibly, we are coming to the end of our deployment. Time has stood still for months, with days and nights fusing together in the burning-hot air of the desert. But now our deployment is being measured in finite units of time. It takes getting used to.

Returning from a patrol with my platoon, I find a blue sedan riddled with bullet holes on the side of the highway. There are a few Iraqi soldiers standing around when we find it. We quickly learn the car belongs to Captain Laithe, one of the senior men in the local police force. Connected, calculating, and English-speaking, he has collaborated with the Americans since the fall of Baghdad. I wondered since I first met him why he cast his lot with us, what calculation he made, and whether we could even understand it—what mix of nobility and venality it contained. His future, however he imagined it, ended with the finality of death in a hail of bullets on the highway less than a mile from our forward operating base.

Not long before we leave, I am awakened out of a sound sleep again, this time at midnight. The company executive officer is at the door. We have another K.I.A. I feel the same shock I did the first time, only there's a certain numbness to it now, as if it were hitting a nerve becoming deadened by repeated blows. Our turn had almost passed, and now this. I nod, and begin collecting my gear. Lieutenant Lenz is outside in the pitch-black. It is the body of one of his marines that we will go out in the dead of night to recover. I ask Lenz if he is all right. I ask him if his marines are all right. The worst thing, he says, is that by now they are used to it. It is better and worse at the same time. I realize that we have all come to accept the loss of familiar faces, to live with it, and cross the line of departure again the next morning. It is this acceptance, rather than the thud of hidden bombs, that has finally made us veterans, and will finish the words on the obscure page of history that we occupy.

We head off in the pitch-black, navigating the highway through the grainy green glow of our night-vision goggles. We move north to a point just north of the place where we lost the two marines in the bomb explosion months before. One of the Humvees in the patrol struck a land mine a short distance from the Iraqi National Guard post the marines had been tasked with protecting.

The sun is rising above the river's palm groves when the trucks arrive to remove the wrecked vehicle. The dead marine's remains are loaded in another truck and driven north towards Al Asad Air Base. The remains will be laid in a flag-draped coffin, and then secured in the cargo hold of a transport plane to be flown back to the United States. We, too, will soon go to Al Asad. We will then strap ourselves into the cargo hold of an identical plane to begin our own journey home. The scrawled memorials on barracks walls to fallen buddies will stay behind for the troops who replace us. They might read the awkwardly worded poems and epitaphs written in loving memory, and half wonder who we were. ♦



"We're moving you from payroll to fear and paranoia."

I'm nine years and seven months old. I'm at home playing peekaboo in my room with my little brother, Jean. It's Saturday evening and the sun has fallen behind the hills. There's silence outside our bungalow, but from time to time the evening wind carries a shout to us. Our parents have kept us indoors since yesterday.

Maman comes into the room and turns off the light before we see her. Jean cries in the darkness, but once she starts kissing him he begins to giggle. He reaches up to be held, but she's in a hurry.

"Don't turn on any lights tonight," she whispers to me.

I nod. "*Yego*, Maman."

"Come with your brother." I carry Jean and follow her. "And don't open the door for anybody. Your papa is not home, I'm not home, nobody is home. Do you hear me, Monique, huh?"

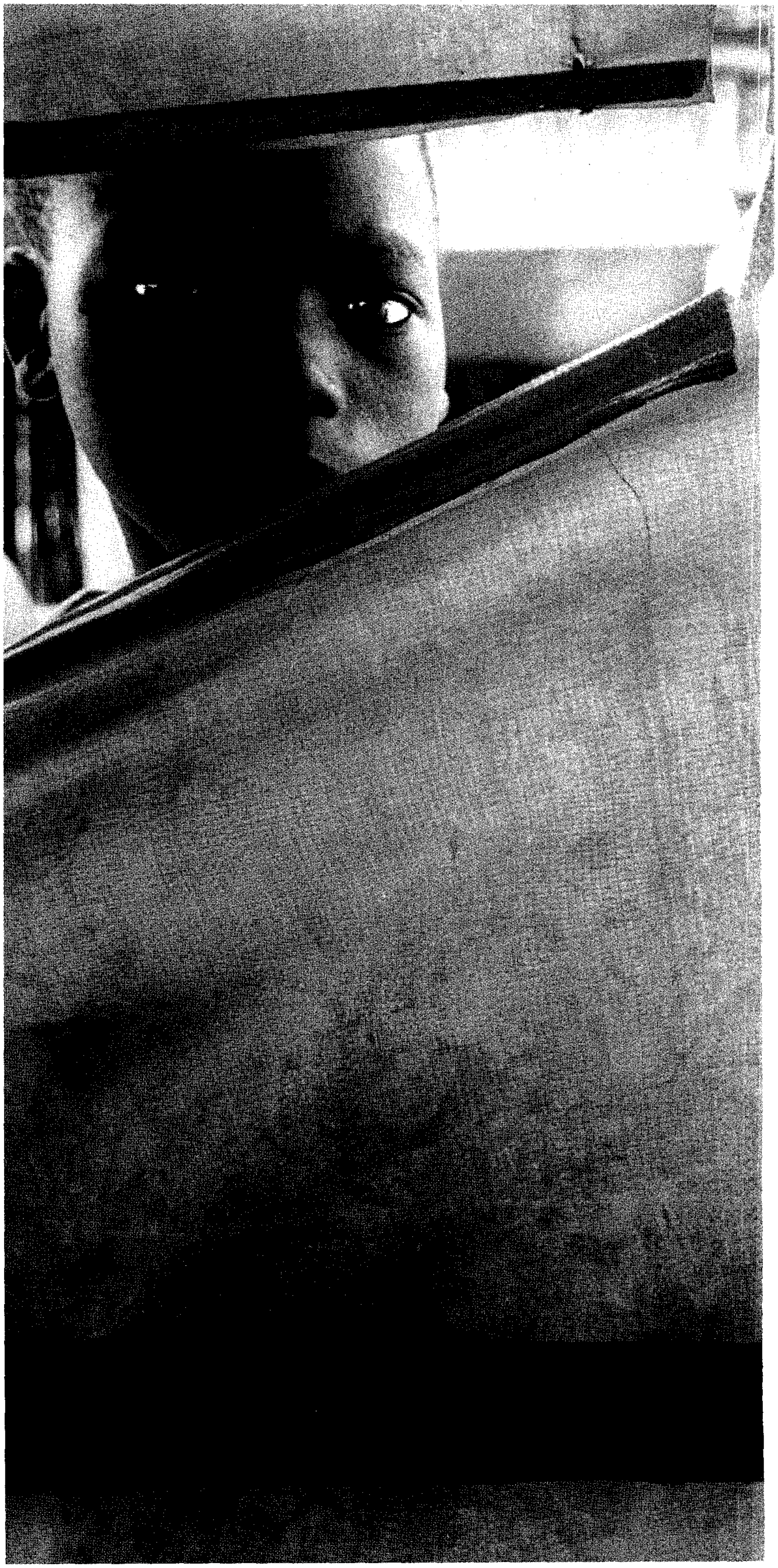
"*Yego*, Maman."

"Swallow all your questions now, bright daughter. When your papa and uncle return, they'll explain things to you."

Maman leads us through the corridor and into her room, where she lights a candle that she has taken from our family altar, in the parlor. She starts to undress, tossing her clothes on the floor. She tells us that she's going out for the night and that she's already late. She's panting, as if she'd been running; her body is shining with sweat. She slips into the beautiful black evening dress that Papa likes and combs out her soft hair. I help her with the zipper at the back of her dress. She paints her lips a deep red and presses them together. The sequins on her dress glitter in the candlelight as if her heart were on fire.

My mother is a very beautiful Tutsi woman. She has high cheekbones, a narrow nose, a sweet mouth, slim fingers, big eyes, and a lean frame. Her skin is so light that you can see the blue veins on the back of her hands, as you can on the hands of Le Père Mertens, our parish priest, who's from Belgium. I look like Maman, and when I grow up I'll be as tall as she is. This is why Papa and all his Hutu people call me Shenge, which means "my little one" in Kinyarwanda.

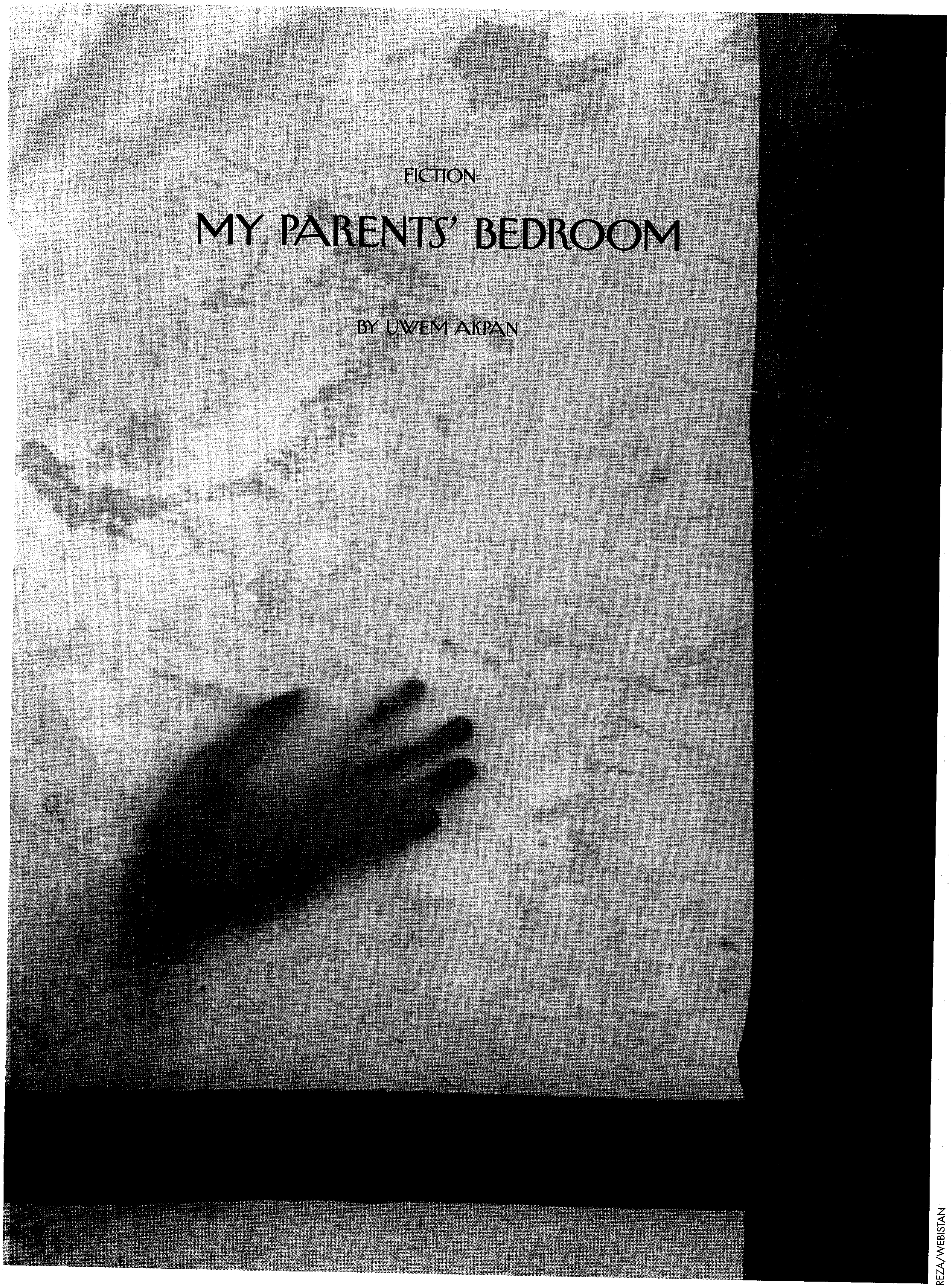
Papa looks like most Hutus, very black. He has a round face, a wide nose,



FICTION

MY PARENTS' BEDROOM

BY UWEM AKPAN



REZA/WEBISTAN

and brown eyes. His lips are as full as a banana. He is a jolly, jolly man who can make you laugh till you cry. Jean looks like him.

"But, Maman, you told me that only bad women go out at night."

"Monique, no questions tonight, I told you."

She stops and stares at me. As I'm about to open my mouth, she shouts, "Quiet! Go, sit with your brother!"

Maman never shouts at me. She's strange today. Tears shine in her eyes. I pick up a bottle of Amour Bruxelles, the perfume Papa gives her because he loves her. Everybody in the neighborhood knows her by its sweet smell. When I put the bottle in her hands, she shivers, as if her mind has just returned to her. Instead of spraying it on herself, she puts it on Jean. He's excited, sniffing his hands and clothes. I beg Maman to put some on me, but she refuses.

"When they ask you," she says sternly, without looking at me, "say you're one of them, O.K.?"

"Who?"

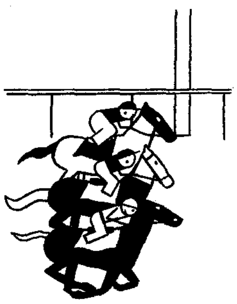
"Anybody. You have to learn to take care of Jean, Monique. You just have to, huh?"

"I will, Maman."

"Promise?"

"Promise."

Maman heads for the parlor, and Jean trails after. He's whimpering to be held. I carry the candle. We sit down on our big sofa, and Maman blows the candle out. Our parlor is never totally dark, because of the crucifix in the corner, which glows yellow-green. All-translucent, as Papa likes to say. Jean toddles to the altar, as usual. He places his hands on the crucifix, as if playing with a toy. The glow enters into his fingers, making them green, and he turns to us and laughs. In quick strides, I bring him back. I don't want him to pull down the crucifix, which leans against the wall, or the vase of bougainvillea beside it. It's part of my duty to tend to the altar. I love the crucifix; all my relatives do. Except Tonton Nzeyimana—the Wizard.



The Wizard is Papa's father's brother. He is a pagan and he is very powerful. If he doesn't like you, unless you're a strong Catholic, he can put his spell on you, until you become useless. The color of his skin is milk with a little coffee. He never married because he says he hates his skin and doesn't want to pass it on. Sometimes he paints himself with charcoal until the rain comes to wash away his blackness. I don't know where he got his color from. My parents say it's a complicated story about intermarriage. He's so old that he walks with a stick. His lips are long and droopy, because he uses them to blow bad luck and disease into people. He likes to frighten children with his ugly face. Whenever I see the Wizard, I run away. Papa, his own nephew, doesn't want him in our house, but Maman tolerates the Wizard. "No matter, he's our relative," she says. Tonton André, Papa's only brother, hates him even more. They don't even greet each other on the road.

Though I'm a girl, Papa says that the crucifix will be mine when he dies, because I'm the firstborn of the family. I will carry it till I give it to my child. Some people laugh at Papa for saying that it'll come to me, a girl. Others shrug and agree with Papa, because he went to university and works in a government ministry. Sometimes when Tonton André and his wife, Tantine Annette, visit us, they praise Papa for this decision. Tantine Annette is pregnant, and I know that they would do the same if God gave them a girl first.

Without his I.D., you'd never know that Tonton André is Papa's brother. He's a cross between Papa and Maman—as tall as Maman but not quite as dark as Papa. He's got a tiny beard. Tantine Annette is Maman's best friend. Though she's Tutsi like Maman, she's as dark as Papa. Sometimes on the road, the police ask for her I.D., to be sure of her roots. These days, my parents tease her that she'll give birth to six babies, because her pregnant stomach is very big. Each time she becomes pregnant, she miscarries, and everybody knows that it's the Wizard's spell. But the couple have been strong in their faith. Sometimes they kiss in public, like Belgians do on TV, and our people don't like this very much. But they don't care. Tonton André takes her to a good hospital in Kigali for checkups, and Papa and our other relatives contribute money to help them, because both of them are only poor primary-school teachers. The Wizard offered to give his money, too, but we don't allow him to. If he gave even one franc, his bad money would swallow all the good contributions, like the sickly, hungry cows in Pharaoh's dream.

Maman stands up suddenly. "Monique, remember to lock the door behind me! Your papa will soon be back." I hear her going into the kitchen. She opens the back door and stops for a moment. Then the door slams. She's gone.

I light the candle again and go into the kitchen and lock the door. We eat rice and fish and return to our room. I dress Jean in his flannel pajamas and sing him to sleep. I change into my nightie, and lie down beside him.

In a dream, I hear Tonton André's voice. He sounds as anxious as he did yesterday afternoon, when he came to call Papa away. "Shenge, Shenge, you must open the door for me!" Tonton André shouts.

"Wait, I'm coming," I try to tell him, but in my dream I have no voice, and my legs have melted like butter in the sun. There's a lot of commotion, and gunshots that sound like bombs.

"Come to the front door, quick!" he shouts again.

I wake up. Tonton André is actually yelling outside our house.

I go into the parlor and turn on the fluorescent lights. My eyes hurt. People are banging on our front door. I see the blades of machetes and axes stabbing through the door, making holes in the plywood. Two windows are smashed, and rifle butts and *udufuni* are poking in. I don't know what's going on. The attackers can't get in through the windows with their guns and small hoes, because they're covered with metal bars. Afraid, I squat on the floor, with my hands covering my head, till the people outside stop and pull back.

I hear Tonton André's voice again, but this time it's calm and deep, as usual, and everything is quiet outside.

"Poor, sweet thing, don't be afraid," he says, now laughing confidently like Jean. "They're gone. Your papa is here with me."

I pick my way through the broken glass and open the door. But Tonton

André comes in with a group. Men and women, all armed.

"Where's Maman?" he asks me.

"Maman went out."

He looks like a madman. His hair is rough, as if he had not combed it for a year. His green shirt is unbuttoned and he's without shoes.

"*Yagiye hehe*?" someone from the mob asks, disappointed. "Where's she gone?"

"She didn't say," I answer.

"Have you seen your papa this evening?" Tonton André asks.

"*Oya*."

"No? I'll kill you," he says, his face swollen with seriousness.

I scan the mob. "You told me Papa was with you. . . . Papa! Papa!"

"The coward has escaped," someone in the crowd says.

"*Nta butungane burimo!*" others shout. "Unfair!"

They look victorious, like football champions. I know some of them. Our church usher, Monsieur Paschal, is humming and chanting and wears a bandanna. Mademoiselle Angeline, my teacher's daughter, is dancing to the chants, as if to reggae beats. She gives a thumbs-up to Monsieur François, who is the preacher at the nearby Adventist church.

Some of them brandish their I.D.s, as if they were conducting a census. Others are now searching our home. Sniffing around like dogs, they've traced Maman's Amour Bruxelles to Jean and are bothering him so he begins to cry. I run to our room and carry him back to the parlor. I can hear them all over the place, overturning beds and breaking down closets.

Suddenly, I see the Wizard by the altar. He turns and winks at me. Then he swings his stick at the crucifix, once, twice, and Christ's body breaks from the cross, crashing to the floor. Limbless, it rolls to my feet. Only bits of its hands and legs are still hanging on the cross, hollow and jagged. The cross has fallen off the altar, too. The Wizard smiles at me, enjoying my frustration. When he's distracted for a moment, I grab Jesus' broken body and hide it under Jean's pajama top. I sit down on the sofa and put Jean on my lap. The Wizard now searches excitedly for the body of Jesus. He is like an overgrown kid looking for his toy.

"Gentlemen, let's pick it up again with 'I Been Livin' on Cold Navy Beans.'"

He turns to me. "Shenge, do you have it?"

I look away. "No."

"Look at me, girl."

"I don't have it."

I hold on tighter to Jean.

The Wizard switches off the lights. Jean bursts into laughter, because now his stomach glows like Jesus. The Wizard turns the lights on again and comes toward us, smiling a bad smile. Jean is not afraid of the old man. When the Wizard reaches for Jesus, Jean fights him off, bending almost double to protect his treasure. The Wizard is laughing, but Jean bites the man's fingers with his eight teeth. I wish he had iron teeth and could bite off the Wizard's whole hand, because it's not funny. But the old man teases us, dangling his tongue and making stupid faces. When he laughs, you can see his gums and all the pits left by his fallen teeth. Now wheezing from too much laughter, he snatches Christ's body from Jean and puts it in his pagan pocket.

Tonton André is bitter and restless. Since I told him that my parents have gone out, he hasn't spoken to me. I'm angry at him, too, because he lied to get in and now the Wizard has destroyed my crucifix and stolen Christ's body.

When I hear noises in my parents' room, I run in there with Jean, because my parents never allow visitors in their bedroom. There are two men rummaging through their closet. One man is bald and wearing stained yellow trousers, the bottoms rolled up—no shirt, no shoes. He has a few strands of hair on his chest, and his belly is huge and firm. The other man is young, secondary-school age. His hair and beard are very neat, as if he were coming from the barber. He's bug-eyed and tall and is wearing jean overalls, a T-shirt, and dirty blue tennis shoes.

The big-bellied man looks at the younger man mischievously and asks me to hug him. Before I can say anything, he wriggles out of his yellow trousers and reaches for me. But I avoid his hands and slip under the bed with Jean. He pulls me out by my ankles. Pressing me down on the floor, the naked man grabs my two wrists with his left hand. He pushes up my nightie with the right and tears my underpants. I shout at the top of my voice. I call out to Tonton André, who is pacing in the corridor. He doesn't come. I keep screaming. I'm twisting and holding my knees together. Then I snap at the naked man with my teeth. He hits my face, this way and that, until my saliva is salted with blood. I spit in his face.

Twice. He bangs my head on the floor, pinning my neck down, punching my left thigh.

"*Oya!* No! Shenge is one of us!" the Wizard tells him, rushing into the room.

"Ah . . . leave this little thing . . . to me," the naked man says slowly. His short pee is pouring on my thighs and my nightie, warm and thick like baby food. I can't breathe, because he has collapsed on me with his whole weight, like a dead man. When he finally gets up, hiding his nakedness with his trousers, the Wizard bends down, peering at me, and breathes a sigh of relief.

"Shenge, can you hear me?" the Wizard says.

"Ummh."

"I say, you're all right!"

"All right."

"Bad days, girl, bad days. Be strong." He turns to my attacker and growls, "You're lucky you didn't open her womb. I would've strangled you myself!"

"Jean," I whisper. "Where's my brother?"

The overalls man finds him under the bed, curled up like a python, and drags him out. Jean lays his big head on my chest. An ache beats in my head as if the man were still banging it on the floor. My eyes show me many men in yellow trousers and overalls, many Wizards. The floor is rising and falling. I try to keep my eyes open but can't. Jean keeps feeling my busted mouth.

Someone lifts me and Jean up and takes us back to the parlor. Tonton André is sitting between two men, who are consoling him. He's got his head in his hands, and the Wizard is standing behind him, patting his shoulder gently.

As soon as Tonton André sees us, he springs to his feet. But they pull him down and scold him and tell him to get ahold of himself. He's not listening, though.

"My bastard brother and his wife are not home?" he says very slowly, as if he were coming out of a deep sleep. "He owes me this one. And I'm killing these children if I don't see him."

"My nephew," the Wizard says, thudding his stick once on the floor. "Don't worry. He must pay, too. Nobody can escape our wrath this time. Nobody."

"*Koko, ni impamo tuzabigira*," people start murmuring in agreement.

I don't know what Papa could owe his younger brother. Papa is richer than he is. Whatever it is, I'm sure that he'll repay him tomorrow.

The crowd calms down. People stand in groups and carry out their conversations, like women at the market. I get the impression that there are more people outside. Only Monsieur François is impatient, telling the others to hurry up so that they can go elsewhere, that the government didn't buy them machetes and guns to be idle.

After a while, the Wizard leaves Tonton André and comes over to us. "Young girl," he says, "you say you don't know where your parents are?"

"I don't know," I say.

"When they return, tell them all the roads are blocked. No escape. And you, clever girl," the old man says, tapping me on the chest, "if you want to live, don't leave this house for anything. Ghosts are all over our land. Bad ghosts." He whisks his cane and tosses his head as if he were commanding the ghosts into existence. And then he goes out, in the flow of the crowd.

I lock up as soon as everyone has left. The flowers are crushed, the altar cloth trampled upon. Pieces of glass are everywhere. The drawers from the writing desk are hanging out, and the bookshelf has fallen over. The TV is now facing the wall, and a cold wind ruffles the window blinds. I find the cross, and put it back on the altar.

I want to sleep, but fear follows me into my room. My fingers are shivering. My head feels heavy and swollen. There's a pebble in my left thigh where the naked man hit me. My mouth is still bleeding, staining the front of my nightie. I shouldn't have tricked the Wizard. What are the ghosts he summoned going to do to us? He has put his spell on Tonton André, too. Jean is covered in goose bumps. I'm too afraid to tidy up our room. We huddle in one corner, on the mattress, which has been tossed onto the floor. I start to pray.

I wake to the sound of my parents and other people arguing in the parlor. There's a lot of noise. It's not yet dawn, and my whole body is sore. One side of my upper lip is swollen as if I had a toffee between it and my gum. I don't see Jean.

I limp into the parlor but see only my parents and Jean. Maybe I was dreaming the other voices. My parents stop talking as soon as they see me. Maman is seated on the sofa like a statue of Marie Mère des Douleurs, looking down. Papa stands near the altar, holding Jean and scooping hot spoonfuls of oatmeal into his mouth. Jean's eyes are dull and watery, as if he hadn't slept for days. Shaking his head, he shrieks and pushes the food away. "Eat up, kid, eat up," Papa says impatiently. "You'll need the energy."

My family isn't preparing for Mass this Sunday morning. The parlor lights are off, the furniture still scattered from last night. The doors and windows are closed, as they have been since Friday, and the dinner table is now pushed up against the front door. Our home feels haunted, as if the ghosts from the Wizard's stick were still inside.

I hurry toward my father. "Good morning, Papa!"

"Sh-h-h . . . yeah, good morning," he whispers. He puts Jean down on the floor and squats and holds my two hands. "No noise. Don't be afraid. I won't let anyone touch you again, O.K.?"

"*Yego*, Papa."

I want to hug him, but he blocks me with his hands. "Don't turn on any lights, and don't bother Maman now."

"The Wizard said that ghosts are—"

"No ghosts here. . . . Listen, no Mass today. Le Père Mertens went on home leave last week." He's not looking at me but peering out through the window.

I hear a sneeze from the kitchen, stifled like a sick cat's. I search my parents' faces, but they're blank. A sudden fear enters my body. Maybe I'm still dreaming, maybe not. I push closer to Papa and ask him, "Tonton André is now friends with the Wizard?"

"Don't mention André in my house anymore."

"He brought a man to tear my underpants."

"I say leave me alone!"

He goes to the window and holds on to the iron bars so that his hands are steady, but his body is trembling. His eyes are blinking fast and his face is tightened. When Papa gets quiet like this, he's ready to pounce on anyone. I go to the sofa and sit down silently. When

IRAQ, 2004

EMMANUEL GUIBERT

The hotel's elevator shaft was next to my room, and when the elevator hit the ground floor it made a muffled echo boom that sounded exactly like a bomb. The elevator sounded like a bomb; thunder sounded like a bomb; construction clangs sounded like a bomb; a door slam sounded like a bomb; bombs sounded like bombs. Firecrackers thrown by kids sounded like sharp, close Kalashnikov fire; a car backfiring sounded like a single shot, unanswered, and nothing to turn your head about.

I had been in Baghdad for six months straight. Every month, the situation got worse, but it crept worse, incrementally, so that it was hard to register, like boiling a lobster in tepid water. It produced not fear, exactly, but an ache, a deep fatigue. My friend Dan told me, "Jesus, you look like shit, get out to Amman for a week." But the rest of the world seemed very far away—almost unimaginable. In any case, at the end of March four American contractors were hanged, burned, and dismembered, in Falluja, and, a few days later, the authorities announced their intention to arrest the Shiite "firebrand" Moqtada al-Sadr for the murder of a Shiite cleric in 2003. There were uprisings in Kufa and Kut, fighting in Sadr City, and more dead American soldiers overnight in Ramadi. Falluja was surrounded; apparently, the Marines were advancing in armor, getting rocketed, and withdrawing. There were gunfights on the road and the highway to Jordan was closed.

We journalists sat around the hotel coffee shop, swapping nasty stories. There was a rumor that the hotel was going to be attacked. "It's like a whirlpool going down the plug hole," one of them said. Then, "No, pretend I didn't say that." Discussions went back and forth with the whiskey bottle. The Spanish were pulling their troops out; translators were getting gunned down on the highway; there were death threats, gunmen on the roofs in Sadr City. An American soldier had shot over Molly's and Steve's heads in Adhamiya. Did you hear that Burns got detained by the Mahdi Army outside Kufa? Later, drunker, the conversation slipped into *fucking jihadis* and *blood-preaching imams* and *those God-crazed idiots cutting people's heads off.* Did you see they've got beheadings as mobile-phone screens now? Stop: let's talk about Coetzee and Orwell and V. S. Naipaul and why Chalabi is such a chump. A political discussion ensued, and it struck me that we foreigners understood very little.

The next day, I drove out to the western suburbs and saw a tank on fire under an underpass, two Black Hawk helicopters circling like flies after carrion. The day after that, I woke at five. It was a silvery opaque dawn, and I dreamed that an explosion had woken me up. The city was on a three-day holiday, but it was unclear to me why the streets were not just empty but deserted. It felt as if something were about to happen. I looked at the stretch of Karrada that I could see from my balcony, a main road toward the Al Jadriyah Bridge, and could see no flicker of life. It was so early that my mind was still fuzzy, full of night demons. I thought, The mujahideen are going to advance straight into the city and come down this road and storm the hotel. The thickset British security guys, who all claimed to be ex-S.A.S., with tattoos on their forearms and pistols in their fanny packs, and who guarded the American TV crews in the hotel, said they had it all figured out. They'd lock themselves behind the cages they'd installed at the entrance to each floor and throw hand grenades down the stairwell.

Was there a curfew? Why this preternatural calm? Sirens went off in the Green Zone; I could just hear them across the river. The dawn brightened like a pale wash and the birds in the tree next to my balcony went crazy with song. A column of American vehicles rumbled into view, two Bradleys, a Humvee, and a troop truck. Where the hell were they going? To defend the bridge? In my disoriented panic, I packed a grab bag. I thought I would have to run through the back streets toward the American checkpoint, where there were signs saying, "Do Not Stop. Vehicles Will Be Shot At." After a few minutes, a foot patrol went past. This was something very unusual. I hadn't seen an American foot patrol in Baghdad in months. But here it was, the soldiers fanned out in formation, advancing slowly up the main road, past the ice-cream parlor and the hedges clipped into elaborate topiary. They appeared to be walking normally, easily. They did not turn their heads and peer nervously into the side streets. They stared ahead and moved with a certain prowling, hip-laden grace. Quite alone, awake, and reasonably freaked out, all I had to make me feel better was their steady gait.

—*Wendell Steavenson*

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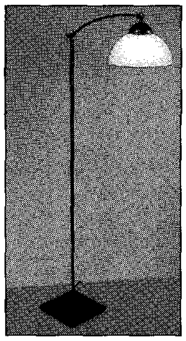

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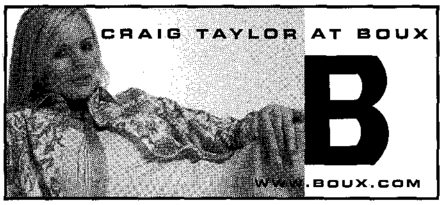
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I slide over to Maman, she pushes me away with one hand. I resist, bending like a tree in the wind, then returning to my position. Nothing interests Maman today, not even Jean, her favorite child. She doesn't say any sweet thing to him or even touch him today. She acts dumb, bewitched, like a goat that the neighborhood children have fed sorghum beer.

From the window, Papa turns and looks at me as if I'm no longer his sweet Shenge. When he sees Jean sleeping on the carpet by Maman's feet, he puts the blame on me: "Stubborn girl, have you no eyes to see that your brother needs a bed? Put him in the bedroom and stop disturbing my life."

But I circle the parlor, like an ant whose hole has been blocked. I am scared to go to my room, because of the ghosts. Papa grabs my wrist and drags me into my room. He turns on the light. Our toys litter the floor. He puts the mattress back on the bed and rearranges the room. But it's still messy. Papa is cursing the toys, destroying the special treats that he and Maman bought for us when they visited America. He kicks the Teddy bear against the wall and stamps on Tweety and Mickey Mouse. Papa's hands are very dirty, the gutters around his nails swollen with black mud. When he sees me looking at him, he says, "What are you staring at?"

"I'm sorry, Papa."

"I told you not to turn on the lights. Who turned on this light?" I turn off the light. "Go get your stupid brother and put him to bed. You must love him."

"*Yego*, Papa."

I go to the parlor and hope that Maman will intervene. She doesn't, so I bring Jean back to the bed.

"And stay here, girl," Papa says. He goes back to the parlor, slamming the door.

When I was younger, I used to ride into the hills on Papa's wide shoulders. We were always visiting Maman's family's place, in the next valley. Papa told me that when he first met Maman she was my age, and they played together in these hills. They went to the same primary school and university.

In the hills, you can see the clouds moving away, like incense smoke in a church. Our country is full of winds, and in the hills they blow at your eyes until tears stain your cheeks. They suck through the valleys, like hungry cows. The birds rise and tumble and swing, their voices mixing with the winds. When Papa laughs his jolly-jolly laugh, the winds carry his voice, too. From the top of the hills, you can see that the earth is red. You can see stands of banana and plantain trees, their middle leaves rolled up, like yellow-green swords slicing the wind. You can see fields of coffee, with farmers wading through them, piggybacking their baskets. When you climb the hills in the dry season, your feet are powdered with dust. When it rains, the red earth runs like blood under a green skin. There are tendrils everywhere, and insects come out of the soil.

I walk tall and proud in our neighborhood. The bullies all know that Papa would attack anyone who messes with me. Even when he is drunk on banana beer, my tears sober him. Sometimes he even goes after Maman, for making his girl sad. He scolds his relatives when they say that it's risky that I look so much like Maman. Papa likes to tell me that he wanted to go against his people and wed Maman in our church when I was born, even though she hadn't given him a son yet. Maman wouldn't hear of it, he says. She wanted to give him a male child before they had the sacrament of matrimony. Papa tells me everything.

Maman's love for me is different. Sometimes she looks at me and becomes sad. She never likes going out in public with me, as she does with Jean. She is always tense, as if a lion will leap out and eat us.

"Maman, I'll always be beautiful!" I told her one day, as Papa was driving us back from a lakeside picnic. Maman was in the passenger's seat, Jean on her lap. I was behind.

"You could be beautiful in other ways, Monique," she said.

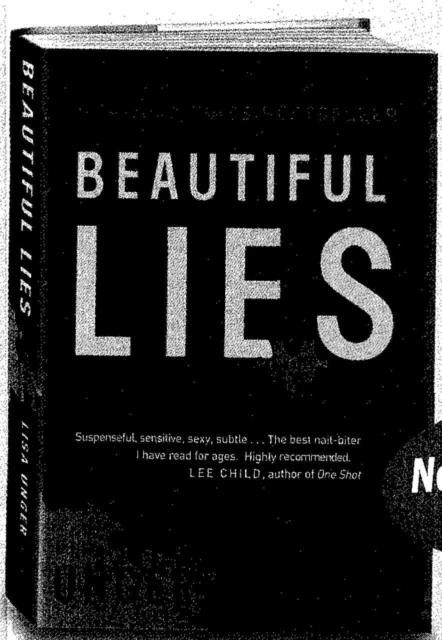
"Leave the poor girl alone," Papa told her.

"I don't understand," I said.

"You will when you grow up," she said.

This time when I wake up, rays of yellow morning are leaking in through the holes in the door and the torn blinds. They riddle the gloom, and I can see dust particles dancing within them. Our neighborhood is quiet. When I go into the parlor, Papa is moving from

"Harlan Coben has a new rival for his thriller crown."
—John Connolly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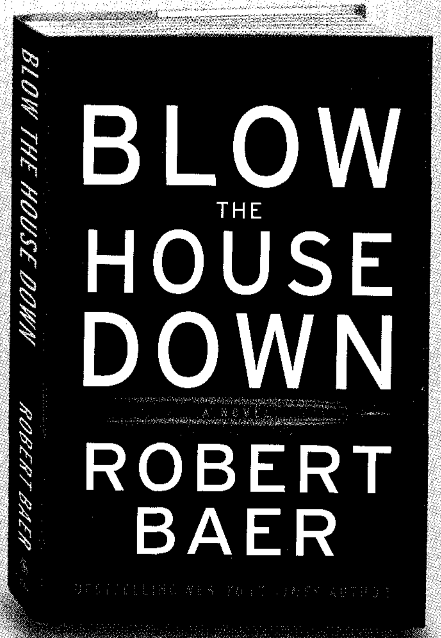
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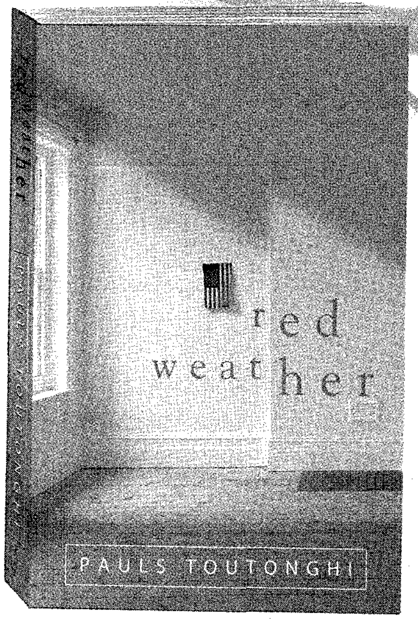
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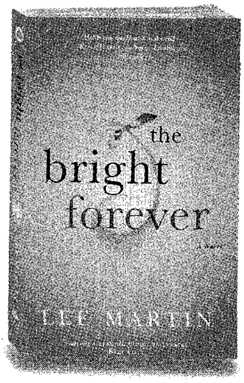
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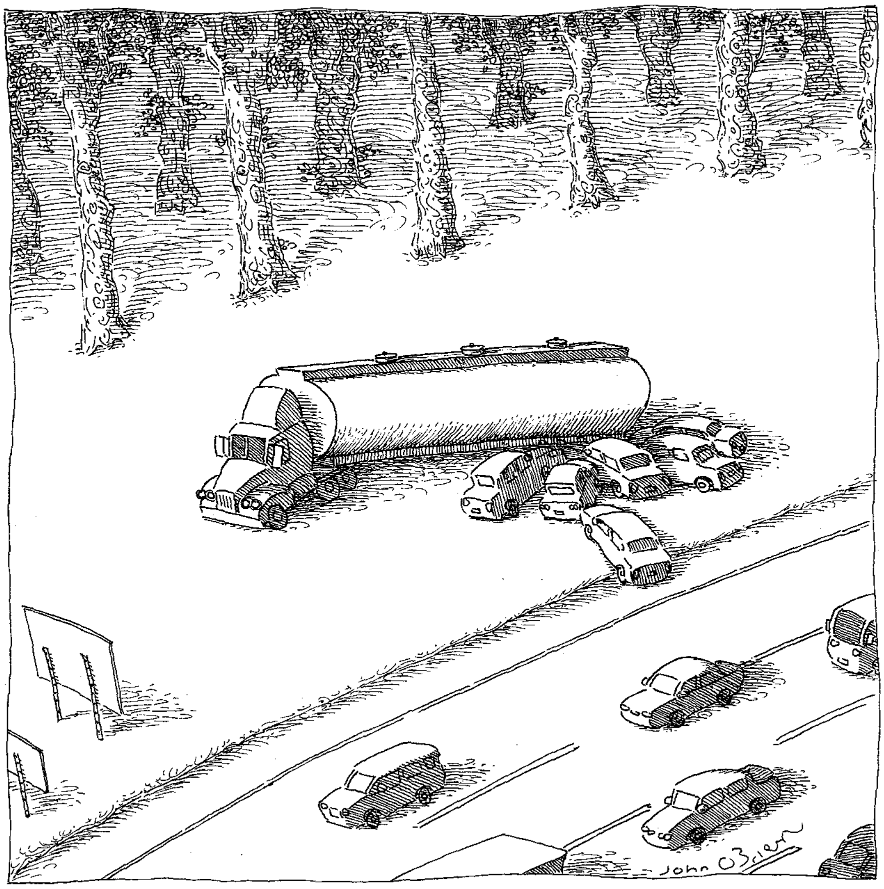
window to window to insure that the blinds leave no space for outsiders to peep in. Maman is standing at the table, straining her eyes as she examines two framed photographs.

One is from my parents' traditional wedding. It's ten years old. I was in Maman's belly then. All the women are elegantly dressed, the *imyitero* draping over them like Le Père Mertens's short vestment. Married women who have given birth to sons wear *urugoli* crowns. Maman got hers only last year, when Jean was born. There are some cows tethered in the background. They were part of the dowry Papa offered for Maman. But no matter what I try to focus on, my eyes go to Tonton André's smiley face. I cover it with my hand, but Maman pushes my fingers off. I look at the other picture instead, which was taken last year, after my parents' church wedding. Papa, Maman, and I are in front. I'm the flower girl, my hands gloved and a flower basket hanging down from my neck with white ribbons. Maman holds baby Jean close to her heart, like a wedding bouquet.

"Maman, Jean is lonely in the bedroom," I say.



"I hope he sleeps the whole day," she says, without looking at me.

"Won't ghosts steal him?"

"He'll get used to them. Go get yourself some food, Monique."

"*Oya*, Maman, I don't want to eat."

"Then go and shower."

"Alone? I don't want to shower."

She touches my nightie. "You need to shower."

"Maman, when wizards pee . . ."

"Don't tell me now." She looks at Papa. "She needs a shower."

Hearing this, I raise my nightie to show Maman my swollen thigh, but she slaps it down, saying, "You'll get a new pair of underpants. Your face will be beautiful again."

I return my attention to the pictures. I scratch at Tonton André's face with my nails to erase him from our family. But the glass saves him.

Maman isn't looking at the photos anymore; her eyes are closed, as if in prayer. I pick up a brass letter opener and begin to scratch the glass over my Tonton's face. The sound distracts Papa from the window and he gives me a bad look. I stop.

"Why did you come down—come *back*?" he says to Maman, searching my face to see whether I've understood the question.

I haven't.

He turns back to Maman. "Woman, why? Return to where you were last night. Please. Leave."

"Whatever you do," she says, "do not let my daughter know."

"She should!" he says, then recoils from the force in his own voice.

My parents are hiding something from me. Maman is very stubborn about it. Their sentences enter my ears as randomly as a toss of the dice on our Ludo board. Papa looks guilty, like a child who can't keep a secret.

"I can't bear it," he says. "I can't."

"If Monique knew where I was last night," Maman argues, "your family would've forced it out of her and shed blood."

As they talk, invisible people are breathing everywhere—at least twenty ghosts are in the air around us. When Maman speaks, the ghosts let out groans of agreement, but my parents don't seem to hear them.

Papa shakes his head. "I mean, you should never have come back. I could have convinced them . . ."

"We needed to be with the children."

I don't understand why Maman is saying she wants to be with me when she won't even look my way. I see dirty water dripping down the white wall beside me. It is coming from the ceiling. At first, it comes down in two thin lines. Then the lines widen and swell into one. Then two more lines come down, in spurts, like little spiders gliding down on threads from a branch of the mango tree in our yard. I touch the liquid with the tip of my finger. Blood.

"Ghost! Ghost!" I scream, diving toward Papa.

"It's not blood," he says.

"You are lying! It's blood! It's blood!"

Papa tries to get between me and the wall, but I get in front of him and hug him. I cling to his body, climbing upward until my hands are around his neck and my legs wrapped around his waist. He tries to muffle my shouts with his hands, but I wriggle and twist till he bows under my weight, and we nearly topple over. He staggers and regains his balance, then he releases his breath, and

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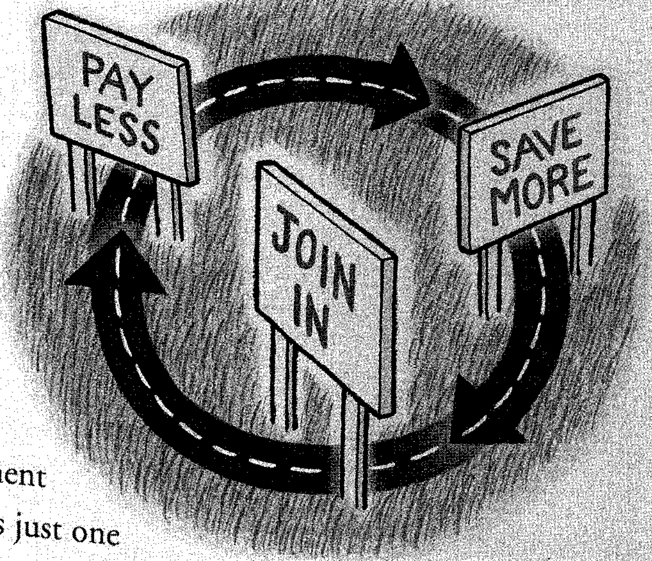

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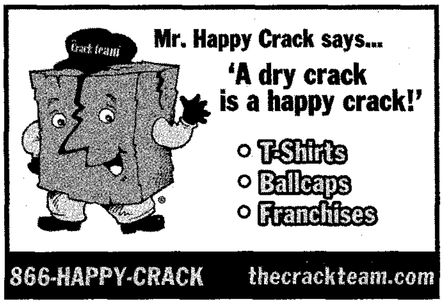
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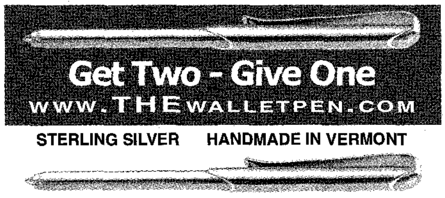
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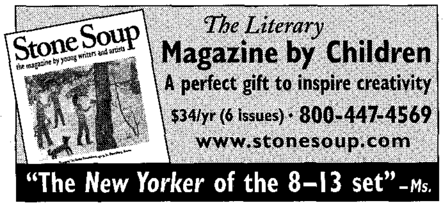
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his stiff body softens. He puts his arms around me and carries me to the sofa. He holds my face to his heart, hiding me from the blood. I stop shouting. Maman is grinding her teeth, and there is a stubborn look on her face—maybe the Wizard has fixed her, too.

My body continues to tremble, no matter how hard Papa holds me. I tell him about last night, and he consoles me, telling me not to cry. Tears fill his eyes, too, then pour down onto me, warm and fast. I've never seen him cry before. Now he can't stop, like me. He's telling me he will always love me, putting my head on his shoulder, stroking my braided hair. Once again, I'm Papa's Shenge.

"They're good ghosts," he sobs, kissing my forehead. "Good people who died."

"Papa, I tricked the Wizard."

"Don't think of last night."

He gives me a piggyback ride to the bathroom. He takes off my nightie and tosses it into the dustbin, then turns on the taps to run the bath. In the walls, the pipes whistle and sigh, but today it feels as if I were hearing the blood flowing through the strange veins of ghosts. The heat of the bath sends mist through the room, and Papa moves within it, still sobbing and wiping his tears with the sleeve of his shirt.

When he cleans my face, his hands smell like raw eggs. I reach out and switch on the light; his dirty hands seem to shock him. He washes them in the sink. We're sweating in the heat and the steam. But when I try to pull back the window blinds, he stops me. In the mirror, my mouth looks as if I'd been dropped on it. I can't brush my teeth. With warm water and iodine from the closet, he cleanses my lip.

He leaves me to wash myself, tells me that I should not be afraid; he'll be right outside the door. After the bath, he goes with me to my room, and I dress in a pair of jeans and a pink T-shirt.

Back in the parlor, we sit together, away from the blood wall, my head on his shoulder. I'm hungry. He offers to make me food, but I say no, because I can't move my mouth to eat.

"Look, we cannot run away from this," Maman says.

Papa shrugs. "But I cannot do it. How do I do it?"

They're talking about secret things again.

"You can," she says. "Yesterday you did it to Annette."

"I should never have gone to André's place yesterday. Big mistake."

"We owe André our coöperation. He's a madman now."

Papa goes to the window, and looks out. "I think we should run to those U.N. soldiers by the street corner."

"*Ndabyanze!* No way! If your brother doesn't get what he wants when he returns, he will hurt all of us."

"The soldiers are our only hope."

"They? Hopeless."

"No."

"My husband, whatever you decide, let our children live, O.K.?"

"Maman, are we going to die?" I ask.

"No, no, my dear," Maman says. "You're not going to die. *Uzabaho.* You will live."

Outside, the mid-morning sun is now very bright, and, though the blinds are still drawn, I can see my parents' clothes clearly now. Papa's light-brown jeans are covered with dark stains. Maman is very dirty, her dress covered with dust and dirt, as if she'd been wrestling on the ground all night. She smells of sweat. I knew that it was a bad idea for her to go out last night; she never goes out at night. She tells me that there are many bad women who do, because Rwanda is getting poorer and poorer.

"Maman, Maman!" Jean shrieks suddenly. He must be having a nightmare. She shakes her head guiltily but doesn't go to him, as if she'd lost her right to be our mother. I go with Papa into our bedroom, and Jean climbs all over him, but wails for Maman. A muffled sneeze breaks the silence again. A ghost is gasping for air, as if it were being stifled. We hold on to Papa, who has brought holy water into the bedroom with him.

"It's O.K., it's O.K.," Papa says, looking around and sprinkling the holy water, as if he has come to console the ghosts, not us. Together we listen to the ghost's raspy breathing. The breaths come further and further apart. They stop. Papa and the other ghosts start to sigh, as if the ailing one had died a second death. There are tears in Papa's eyes, and his mouth is moving without words. He is commanding ghosts, like the Wizard, but without a stick.

Someone begins to pound on our front door. Papa quickly hands Jean to me. "Don't open the door!" he hisses to Maman in the parlor, then turns to me. "And don't take your brother out there!" He stays with us, but his mind is in the parlor, where we can hear Maman pushing aside the table, opening the front door, and whispering to people. We hear chairs and tables being moved. Then there's a grating sound. On the roof, I can hear big birds flapping their wings for takeoff. Then quiet. The people must have left, and Maman is alone again in the parlor.

Somebody wails in a house down the road. Jean begins to cry. I pat him on the back and sing for him in a whisper. He's licking his lips, because he wants food. Papa takes us into the parlor and offers Jean the remains of the oatmeal. He chews the cold chunks hungrily. "Young man, I told you to eat the whole thing in the morning," Papa says. "You children are a burden to us!" He gives me bread slices and milk from the fridge. I soak the slices and swallow them without chewing.

A mob is chanting in the distance; it sounds like it's making its way toward our house. Papa goes to the window. Another voice begins to wail. A third voice, a fourth, a fifth, a child's—it sounds like my friend Hélène. Before I can say anything, Papa says, "Shenge, forget about that Twa girl."

Hélène and I sit next to each other at school. She's the brightest in our class, and during recreation we jump rope together in the schoolyard. She's petite and hairy, with a flat forehead like a monkey. Most of the Twa people are like that. They're few in our country. My parents say that they're peaceful and that when the world talks about our country they're never mentioned.

Hélène is an orphan, because the Wizard fixed her parents last year. Mademoiselle Angeline said that he cursed them with AIDS by throwing his gris-gris over their roof. Now Papa is paying Hélène's school fees. We're also in the same catechism class and Papa has promised to throw a joint party for our first Holy Communion. Last year, Hélène took the first prize in community service in our class—organized by Le Père Mertens. I came in second. We fetched the most buckets of water for old people in the neighborhood. He said if you're Hutu you should fetch for the Tutsis or the Twa. If you're Tutsi, you do it for the Hutus or the Twa. If you're Twa, you serve the other two. Being both Tutsi and Hutu, I fetched for everybody with my small bucket.

"We can't take her in," Papa says, and shrugs. "And how does this crisis concern the Twa?"

Suddenly, Maman yanks the table away from the door again and unlocks it. But she doesn't open the door, just leans on it. More choked cries crack the day like a whip. There are gunshots in the distance. Papa approaches Maman, his hands shaking. He locks the door and takes her back to her seat. He pushes the table back against the door.

Maman stands up suddenly and pulls out the biggest roll of money I've ever seen from inside her dress. The notes are squeezed and damp, as if she had been holding on to them all night. "This should help for a while," she says, offering the roll to Papa. "I hope the banks will reopen soon." He doesn't touch the money. "For our children, then," she says, placing the money on the table.

I tell Papa, "We must give the money to Tonton André to pay him back."

"*Ego imana y'Urwanda!*" Maman swears, cutting me off. "My daughter, shut up. Do you want to die?"

Her lips quake as if she has malaria. Papa pulls his I.D. from his back pocket and considers the details with disgust. He gets Maman's card out of his pocket, too. Joining the two together, he tears them into large pieces, then into tiny pieces, like confetti. He puts the scraps on the table and goes back to his security post at the window. Then he comes back and gathers them up, but he can't repair the damage. He puts the pieces into his pocket.

Evening is falling. Maman walks stiffly across the room and kneels by the altar. Papa speaks to her, but she doesn't reply. He touches her and she begins to sob.

"By this, your Shenge's crucifix," Maman says, getting up, "promise me

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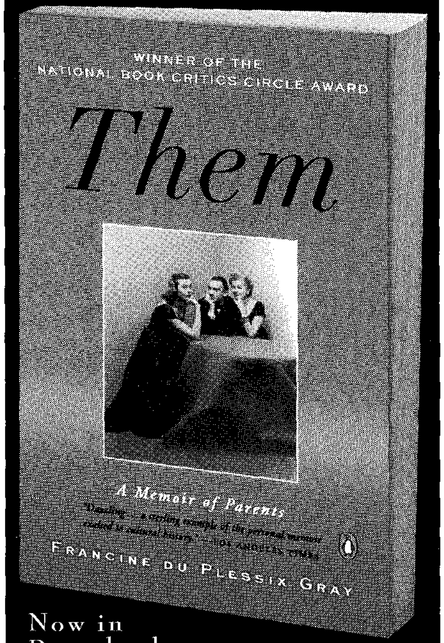

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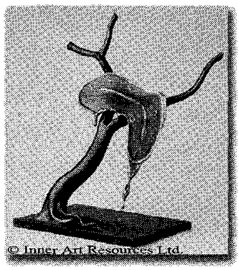

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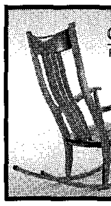
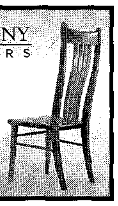

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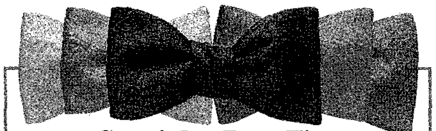

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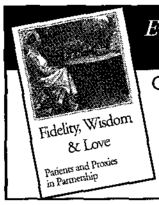

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you won't betray the people who've run to us for safety."

He nods. "I promise . . . *ndakwijeje*."

Slowly, Maman removes the gold ring from her finger and holds it out for Papa.

"Sell this and take care of yourself and the children."

Papa backs away, his eyes closed. When he opens them, they're clouded, like a rainy day. Maman comes over to me and places the money on my palms and puts the ring on top of it.

"Don't go away, Maman. Papa loves you."

"I know, Monique, I know."

"Is it because you went out last night?"

"No, no, I did not go out last night!" she says. I leave everything on the altar, kneel in front of Papa, and beg him with all my love to forgive her though she's lying. He turns away. I go back to the sofa. "Your papa is a good man," Maman says, hugging me.

I push Jean against her, but she avoids his eyes. I think of Le Père Mertens. I plead with Maman to wait for him to return from Belgium to reconcile them. "If you confess to Le Père Mertens," I say, "Jesus shall forgive you."

There's a light knock on the door. Maman sits up, pushing Jean off like a scorpion. Someone is crying softly outside our door. Maman walks past Papa to push aside the table and open the door. It's Hélène. She's sprawled on our doorstep. Maman quickly carries her inside, and Papa locks the door.

Hélène is soaked in blood and has been crawling through the dust. Her right foot is dangling on strings, like a shoe tied to the clothesline by its lace. Papa binds her foot with a towel, but the blood soaks through. I hold her hand, which is cold and sticky.

"You'll be O.K., Hélène," I tell her. She faints.

"No, St. Jude Thadée, no!" Maman exclaims, gathering Hélène's limp body in a hug. "Monique, your friend will be fine."

I can hear a mob coming, but my parents are more interested in Hélène. Papa climbs onto a chair, then onto the table. He opens the hatch of the parlor ceiling and asks Maman to relay Hélène to him.

"Remember, we've too many up there," Maman says. "When I came down, you had five in there . . . and I put two more in just hours ago. The ceiling will collapse."

They take Hélène into our room, and Maman pulls open the hatch. A cloud of fine dust explodes into the room from the ceiling. They shove Hélène's body in.

Now I understand—they are hiding people in our ceiling. Maman was in the ceiling last night. She tricked me. Nobody is telling me the truth today. Tomorrow I must remind them that lying is a sin.

As the mob closes in on the house, chanting, the ceiling people begin to pray. I recognize their voices as those of our Tutsi neighbors and fellow-parishioners. They're silent as Papa opens the front door to the crowd, which is bigger than last night and pushes into our home like floodwater. These people look tired, yet they sing on like drunks. Their weapons and hands and shoes and clothes are covered with blood, their palms slimy. Our house smells suddenly like an abattoir. I see the man who attacked me; his yellow trousers are now reddish brown. He stares at me; I hold on to Papa, who is hanging his head.

Maman runs into her bedroom. Four men are restraining Tonton André, who still wants to kill us all. I run to Maman and sit with her on the bed. Soon, the mob enters the room, too, bringing Papa. They give Papa a big machete. He begins to tremble, his eyes blinking. A man tears me away from Maman and pushes me toward Jean, who's in the corner. Papa is standing before Maman, his fingers on the knife's handle.

"My people," he mumbles, "let another do it. Please."

"No, you do it, traitor!" Tonton André shouts, struggling with those holding him. "You were with us when I killed Annette yesterday. My pregnant wife. You can't keep yours. Where did you disappear to when we came last night? You love your family more than I loved mine? Yes?"

"If we kill your wife for you," the Wizard says, "we must kill you. And your children, too." He thuds his stick. "Otherwise, after cleansing our land of

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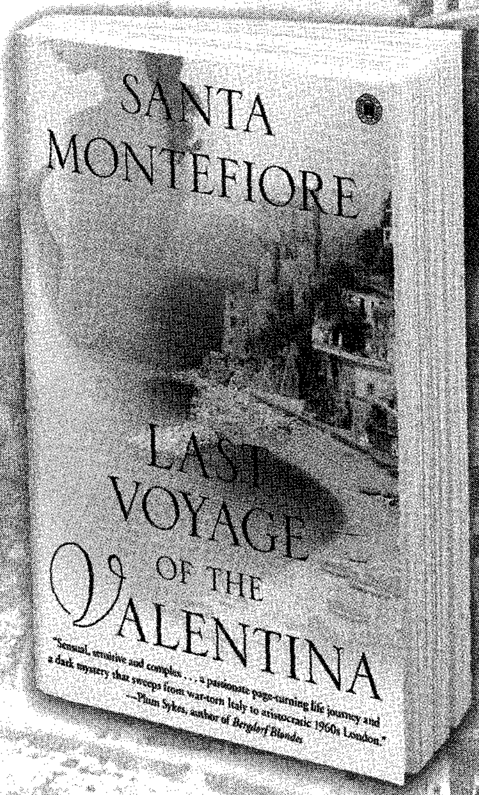

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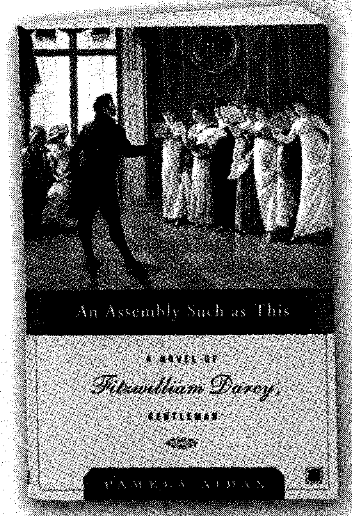

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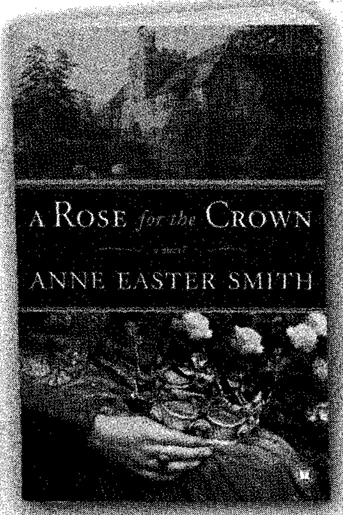

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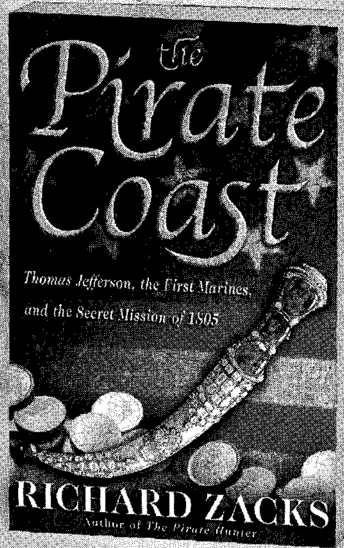
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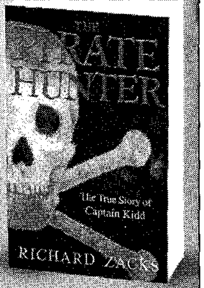

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HYPERION
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Tutsi nuisance, your children will come after us. We must remain one. Nothing shall dilute our blood. Not God. Not marriage."

Tonton André shouts, "Shenge, how many Tutsis has Papa hidden—"

"My husband, be a man," Maman interrupts, looking down.

"Shenge, answer!" someone yells. The crowd of Hutus murmur and become impatient. "*Wowe, subiza.*"

"My husband, you promised me."

Papa lands the machete on Maman's head. Her voice chokes and she falls off the bed and onto her back on the wooden floor. It's like a dream. The knife tumbles out of Papa's hand. His eyes are closed, his face calm, though he's shaking.

Maman straightens out on the floor as if she were yawning. Her feet kick, and her chest rises and locks as if she were holding her breath. There's blood everywhere—on everybody around her. It flows into Maman's eyes. She looks at us through the blood. She sees Papa become a wizard, sees his people telling him bad things. The blood overflows her eyelids, and Maman is weeping red tears. My bladder softens and pee flows down my legs toward the blood. The blood overpowers it, bathing my feet. Papa opens his eyes slowly. His breaths are long and slow. He bends down and closes Maman's eyes with shaky hands.

"If you let any Tutsi live," they tell him, "you're dead." And then they begin to leave, some patting him on the back. Tonton André is calm now, stroking his goatee. He tugs at Papa's sleeve. Papa covers Maman with a white bedspread and then goes off with the mob, without looking at me or Jean. Maman's ring and money disappear with them.

I cry with the ceiling people until my voice cracks and my tongue dries up. No one can ever call me Shenge again. I want to sit with Maman forever, and I want to run away at the same time. Sometimes I think she's sleeping and hugging Hélène under the bedspread and the blood is Hélène's. I don't want to wake them up. My mind is no longer mine; it's doing things on its own. It begins to run backward, and I see the blood flowing back into Maman. I see her rising suddenly, as suddenly as she fell. I see Papa's knife lifting from her hair. She's saying, "Me promised you."

"Yes, Maman," I say. "You promised me!"

Jean is startled by my shout. He stamps around in the blood, as if he were playing in mud.

I begin to think of Maman as one of the people in the ceiling. It's not safe for her to come down yet. She's lying up there quietly, holding on to the rafters, just as she must have been last night when the man in the yellow trousers attacked me. She's waiting for the right time to cry with me. I think that Tonton André is hiding Tantine Annette in his ceiling and fooling everyone into believing that he killed her. I see her lying, face up, on a wooden beam, with her mountain belly, the way I lie on the lowest branch of our mango tree and try to count the fruit. Soon, Tonton André will bring her down gently. She'll give birth, and my uncle will cover her mouth with Belgian kisses.

Jean yanks the cloth off Maman and tries to wake her. He straightens her finger, but it bends back slowly, as if she were teasing him. He sticks his fingers into Maman's hair and kneads it, the blood thick like red shampoo. As the ceiling people weep, he wipes his hands on her clothes and walks outside, giggling.

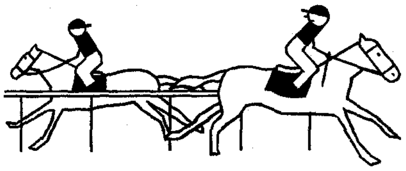
I wander from room to room, listening for her voice among the ceiling voices. When there's silence, her presence fills my heart.

"Forgive us, Monique," Madame Thérèse says from the parlor ceiling.

"We'll always support you and Jean," her husband stammers from above my room. "Your parents are good people, Monique. We'll pay your school fees. You're ours now."

"Get this dead body off me," Grandmaman de Martin groans from the corridor. "It's dead, it's dead!"

"Just be patient," someone close to her says. "We'll send the dead down carefully before they fall through."



Some praise God for the way my parents' marriage has saved them. Grand-maman de Martin becomes hysterical, forcing everyone else to rearrange themselves in the ceiling in the hallway. I identify each voice, but Maman's voice isn't there. Why hasn't she said something to me? Why doesn't she order me to go and shower?

All the things that Maman used to tell me come at me at once, and yet separately—in play, in anger, in fear. There is a command, a lullaby, the sound of her kiss on my cheek. Perhaps she is still trying to protect me from what is to come. She's capable of doing that, I know, just as she stopped Papa from telling me that he was going to smash her head.

"I'm waiting for Maman," I tell the ceiling people.

"She's gone, Monique."

"No, no, I know now. She's up there."

"*Yagiye hehe*? Where?"

"Stop lying! Tell my mother to talk to me."

The parlor ceiling is now creaking and sagging in the middle, and Madame Thérèse starts to laugh like a drunk. "You're right, Monique. We're just kidding. Smart girl, yes, your maman is here but she will come down only if you go outside to get Jean. She's had a long day."

"*Yego*, Madame," I say, "wake her up."

"She's hearing you," Monsieur Pierre Nsabimana says suddenly from the kitchen. He hasn't said anything all this while. His voice calms me, and I move toward it, my eyes fixed on the ceiling. Someone begins the Catena in a harsh, rapid whisper. It's not Maman. She always takes her time to say her prayer.

"Do you want your maman to fall with the ceiling on you?" Monsieur Pierre says.

"No."

"Then, girl, leave the house, and don't come back!"

The ceiling above the altar begins to tear apart from the wall and people scurry away from that end, like giant lizards. I pick up the broken crucifix and hurry outside.

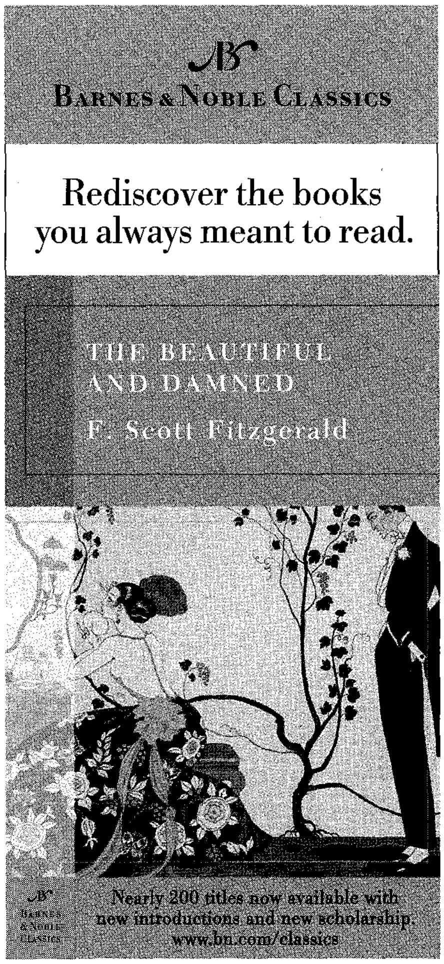
There are corpses everywhere. Their clothes are dancing in the wind. Where blood has soaked the earth, the grass doesn't move. Vultures are poking the dead with their long beaks; Jean is driving them away, stamping his feet and swirling his arms. His hands are stained, because he's been trying to raise the dead. He's not laughing anymore. His eyes are wide open, and there's a frown on his babyish forehead.

Then he wanders toward the U.N. soldiers at the corner, their rifles shiny in the twilight. They're walking away from him, as if they were a mirage. The vultures are following Jean. I scream at them, but they continue to taunt him, like stubborn mosquitoes. Jean doesn't hear. He sits on the ground, kicking his legs and crying because the soldiers won't wait for him. I squat before my brother, begging him to climb on my back. He does and keeps quiet.

We limp on into the chilly night, ascending the stony road into the hills. The blood has dried into our clothes like starch. There's a smaller mob coming toward us. Monsieur Henri is among them. He's carrying a huge torch, and the flame is eating the night in large, windy gulps. These are our people on Maman's side, and they're all in military clothes. Like another football fan club, they're chanting about how they're going to kill Papa's people. Some of them have guns. If Papa couldn't spare Maman's life, would my mother's relatives spare mine? Or my brother's?

I slip into the bush, with Jean on my back, one hand holding the crucifix, the other shielding my eyes from the tall grass and the branches, my feet cold and bracing for thorns. Jean presses hard against me, his face digging into my back. "Maman says do not be afraid," I tell him. Then we lie down on the crucifix to hide its brightness. We want to live; we don't want to die. I must be strong.

After the mob runs past us, I return to the road and look back. They drag Maman out by the legs and set fire to the house. By the time their fellow-Tutsis in the ceiling begin to shout, the fire is unstoppable. They run on. They run after Papa's people. We walk forward. Everywhere is dark, and the wind spreads black clouds like blankets across the sky. My brother is toying with the glow of the crucifix, babbling like mad. ♦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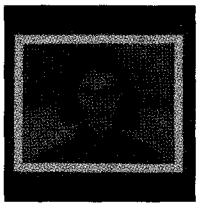
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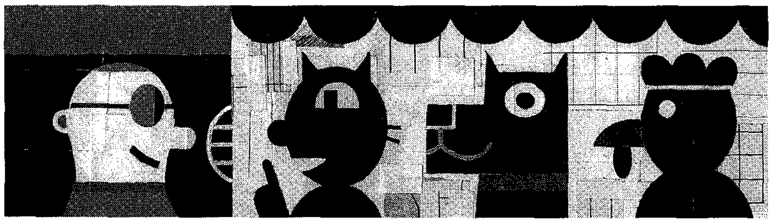


EDWARD SOREL

BOOKS

THE BIG SLEAZY

How Huey Long took Louisiana.

BY ELIZABETH KOLBERT

On the night of September 3, 1930, a group of law-enforcement officials—members of the newly formed Louisiana Bureau of Criminal Identification—stormed into a room at Shreveport's Gardner Hotel, where a man named Sam Irby was sleeping. Irby was the uncle of a young woman, Alice Lee Grosjean, who served as secretary to the governor, Huey P. Long, and also, almost certainly, as Long's mistress. For a time, Irby had worked for the state's Highway Department and as business manager for the *Louisiana Progress*, a newspaper Long had founded, but he had been fired from both posts. Recently, he had approached members of the large (and increasingly anxious) anti-Long camp, offering to testify about Highway Commission corruption. Irby was not arrested, or formally taken into custody; nevertheless, by the next day he had vanished. It was rumored that he had been carried off to Angola, the state prison; or that he had been locked in the Jefferson Parish jail; or—the theory favored by many—that he was buried in the muck at the bottom of some bayou. Mayor T. Semmes Walmsley, of New Orleans, called Irby's disappearance "the most heinous public crime in Louisiana history." No one had any doubt about who had engineered it.

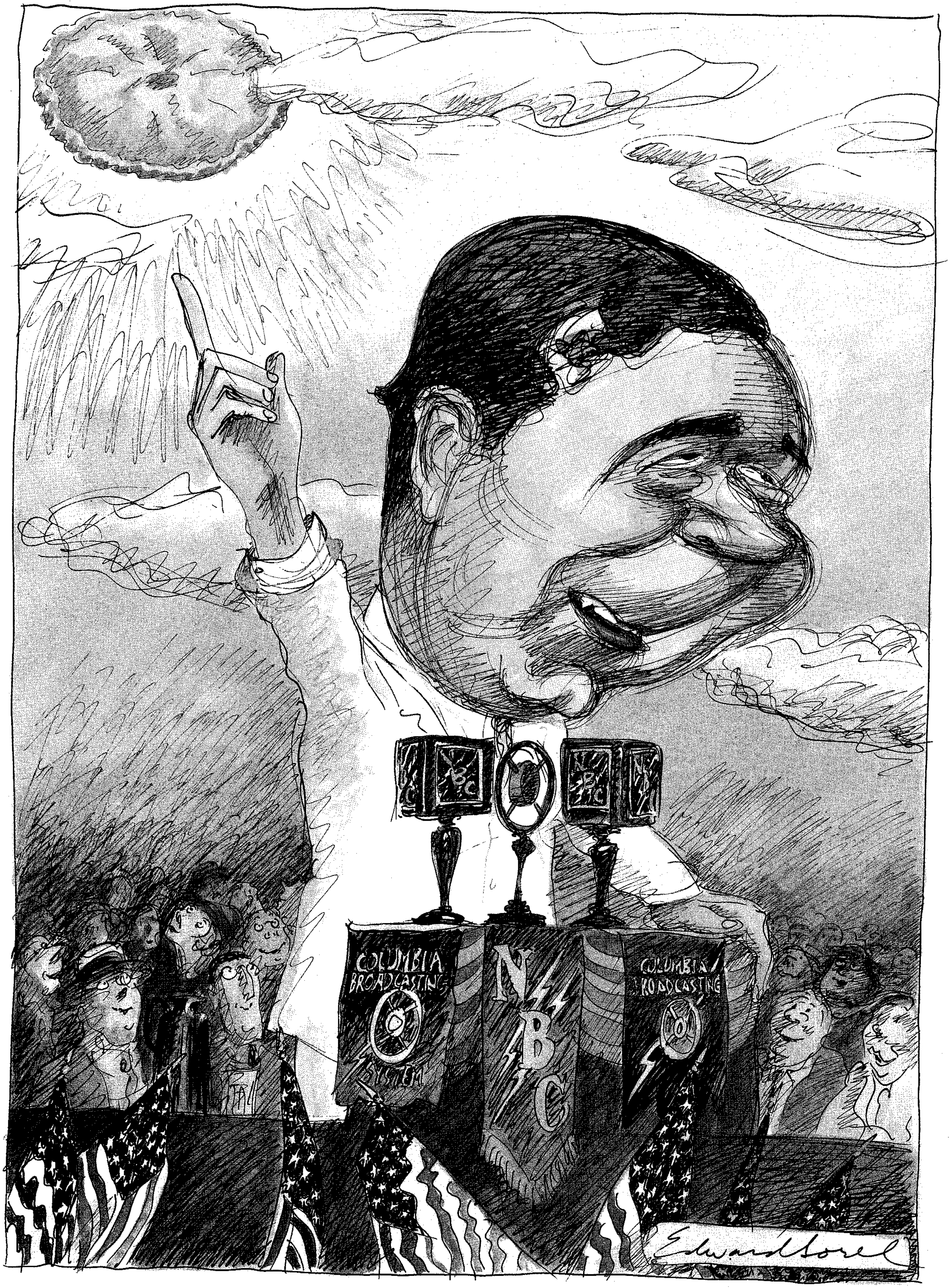
Many politicians dream of kidnapping their enemies. But what kind actually does it? At the time of Irby's disappearance, Long was running for the United States Senate, even though he had been elected governor just two years earlier. He was financing his campaign through his infamous system of deducts: state employees, as one Long appointee later explained, were required to "voluntarily" contribute ten per cent of their salaries. Long's opponent for the Democratic nomination—in nineteen-twenties Louisiana, the only thing that mattered—was the seventy-two-year-old incumbent, Joseph Ransdell, a gaunt man with an antebellum-style goatee. Long liked to refer to Ransdell as Old Feather Duster, or, in an apparent allusion to the Senator's facial hair, as Old Trashy Mouth. Ransdell's supporters condemned Long as, among other things, a "little snivelling demagogue," a "blasphemer, a ruffian, and a cad," a "liar, a briber, an embezzler of the people's money," and a "counterfeit Mussolini." The kidnapping occurred less than a week before the primary, and the anti-Long forces might have been able to capitalize on it had the incident not ended, as so many Longian adventures did, with an outrageous twist. Irby resurfaced on September 7th, claiming—against all evidence—to have staged the kidnapping himself. On primary day, Long won by a wide margin and immediately took to signing his correspondence "Governor and Senator-elect."

While Long was alive, many writers were drawn to his startling excesses; A. J. Liebling interviewed him twice, and both times Long wore pajamas. (Liebling described Long as a "chubby man" with ginger hair and skin "the color of a sunburn coming on.") Dead, he became, if anything, even more fascinating. In 1935, the year of Long's assassination, four biographies appeared. The same year, Sinclair Lewis created Buzz Windrip, the Long-like protagonist of "It Can't Happen Here," and a decade after that Robert Penn Warren produced Willie Stark (to be played onscreen later this year by, of all unlikely people, Sean Penn). T. Harry Williams's "Huey Long," published in 1969, won both the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize; it runs to almost nine hundred pages.

The latest contribution to this field, "Kingfish: The Reign of Huey P. Long" (Random House; $26.95), by Richard D. White, Jr., is modest, almost to a fault, in its ambitions. It provides little new information about Long's career and doesn't even claim to offer a new assessment of his significance. But, in a way, that hardly matters. People continue to publish books about Long not because of what he represents (populism gone awry or fascism barely averted) or how he influenced American politics ("More bunkum has been written about Huey Long and his place in history than any man in this region I know of," Sam Jones, a three-term Louisiana governor, once observed) but because his story remains irresistible.

Born in 1893, the seventh of ten children, Huey Pierce Long grew up in the hill country of Winn Parish, in the northern part of the state. His father raised cattle and hogs, and when the Arkansas Southern Railroad extended its line into the nearby town of Winnfield, Old Hu sold off large parcels of land to developers. The proceeds made the Long family one of the wealthiest in the parish, but Huey, later in life, liked to tell things differently. He made much of having been born in a log cabin (actually, it was a sizable log house), a story that his followers took up and embellished. "Every time I hear of that cabin, it gets smaller and smaller," one of his sisters complained.

Long's mother, Caledonia, tried to steer him toward a career in the ministry, and at one point he went so far as to accept money from her to attend a Baptist college in Oklahoma. There is no evidence, however, that he enrolled. For several years, he worked as a travelling salesman, first for a company that made a lard substitute called Cottolene, and later for a company that sold a concoction for relieving menstrual cramps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In 1933, Long formed the Share Our Wealth Society, claiming that his plans would provide every family with a home and a car.

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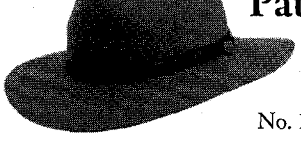

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known as the Wine of Cardui. Along the way, he met his future wife, Rose, a young stenographer who was participating in a Cottolene-sponsored bake-off.

When Long was growing up, the most important political organization in Louisiana was the New Orleans Democratic machine, known as the Old Regulars. The Old Regulars were expert at all the usual forms of graft—doling out patronage, padding registration rolls, harassing unaffiliated voters—and, by aligning themselves with the state's business interests, most notably Standard Oil, they were often able to extend their control far beyond the city limits. As the name suggests, the Old Regulars were clannish and conservative, and their primary goal was self-perpetuation. In this go-along-to-get-along culture, Louisiana's poverty and general backwardness rarely featured as an election theme.

From the start of his political career, Long operated according to a different set of principles. At twenty-five, he ran for and won a seat on the state Railroad Commission, turning practically the first meeting he attended into a denunciation of Standard Oil. At the following meeting, he demanded that the oil company be declared a public utility, a move that would have given the commission regulatory control over its pipelines. In the next several years, he also took on the railroads, the telegraph companies, and the administration of the governor at the time, John M. Parker. (At one point, Parker sued Long for libel; Long lost and was fined a dollar.) In almost all of his battles, Long took the side of ratepayers and small businesses against large (and, to a great extent, predatory) corporations. In 1923, he forced one of the state's major phone companies to give up a twenty-per-cent rate increase that it had been granted. Thousands of customers received refund checks, and Long made sure that they knew whom they had to thank.

Long was not naturally a gifted speaker; he tended toward shrillness and sawed the air with his arms as he talked. But, after peddling Cottolene and the Wine of Cardui, he knew how to move a product. His fights generated headlines, often because he wrote them himself. One veteran reporter recalled that during the phone-rebate case Long would drop off articles in praise of his actions along with a half-gallon jar of moonshine.

When Long decided to run for governor, in 1924, he realized that the Old Regulars—and just about every other Party organization in the state with any influence—would be working against him. In this hopeless situation, he discerned an advantage. "In every parish there is a boss, usually the sheriff," Long explained. "He has forty percent of the votes. Forty percent are opposed to him, and twenty percent are in-betweens. I'm going into every parish and cuss out the boss. That gives me forty percent of the votes to begin with, and I will hoss trade them out of the in-betweens." Long's campaign was a tour de force of aggression; rarely, the New Orleans *Picayune* opined, had there been a candidate whose utterances were "so shot through with gross error" and "so careless of truth generally." Long ran well for a candidate who had no organizational support, but he still lost, at which point he immediately began looking toward the next election.

In 1927, record heavy rains caused massive flooding along the Mississippi. To save New Orleans, the city's leaders decided—probably hysterically—to blow up the levee downriver. The decision cost thousands of trappers and fishermen in the parishes south and east of New Orleans their homes. In "Kingfish," White argues that their resentment was key to Long's victory the following year. Although he was a Baptist from the northern part of the state, Long swept the predominantly Catholic, Cajun parishes of Acadiana.

Long was inaugurated on May 21, 1928. On May 22nd, he fired seventy-three employees of the New Orleans Dock Board. He proceeded to work his way through the state Highway Commission, the state Board of Health, the state Hospital Board, and the state Conservation Commission, replacing all employees who owed their jobs to the Old Regulars with workers loyal only to him. The Orleans Parish Levee Board, which oversaw the city's elaborate system of flood control, was a particularly rich trove of patronage, but its directors served fixed terms and could not be removed by the governor. Long had the state legislature dissolve the nine-member board, and replace it with a five-member body. To the new body, he appointed the head of the old board and four of his own men.

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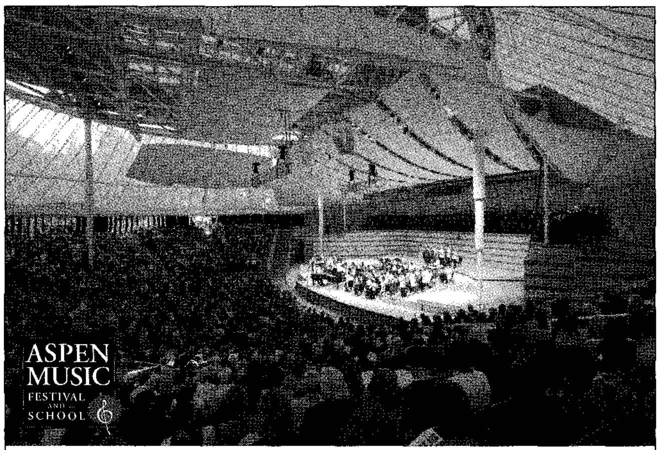

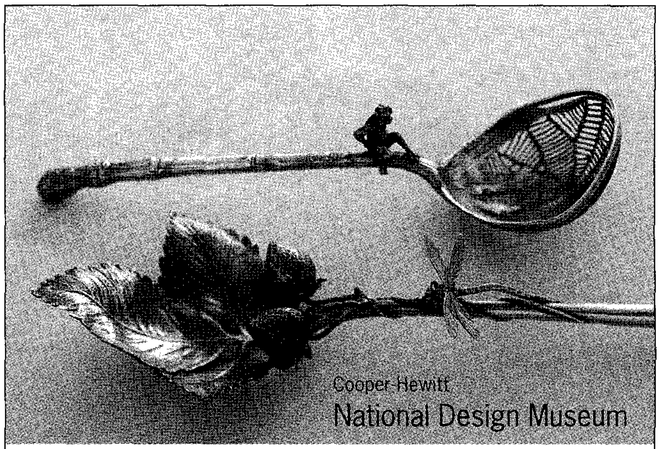

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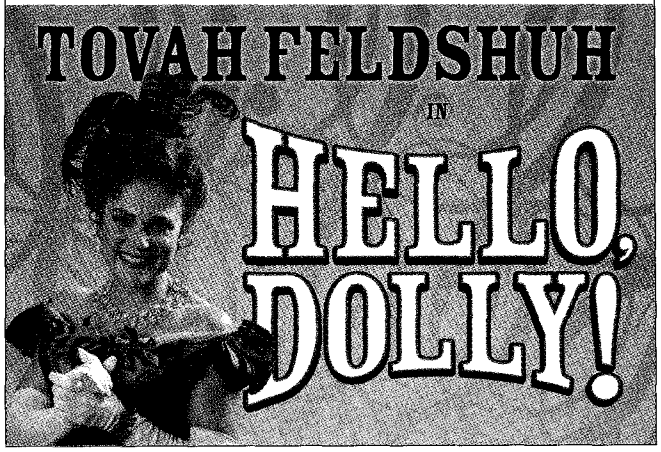

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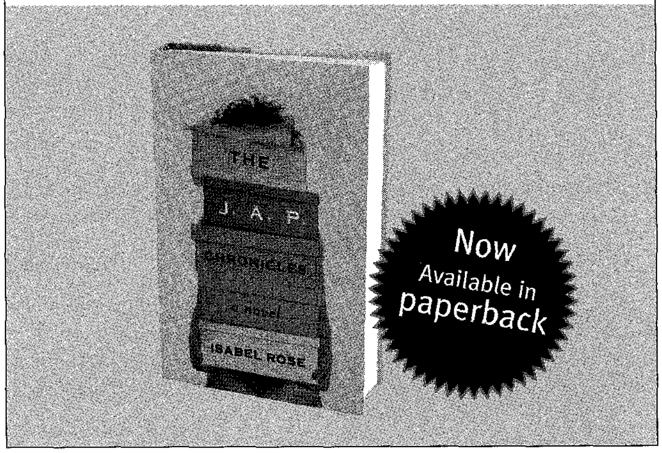

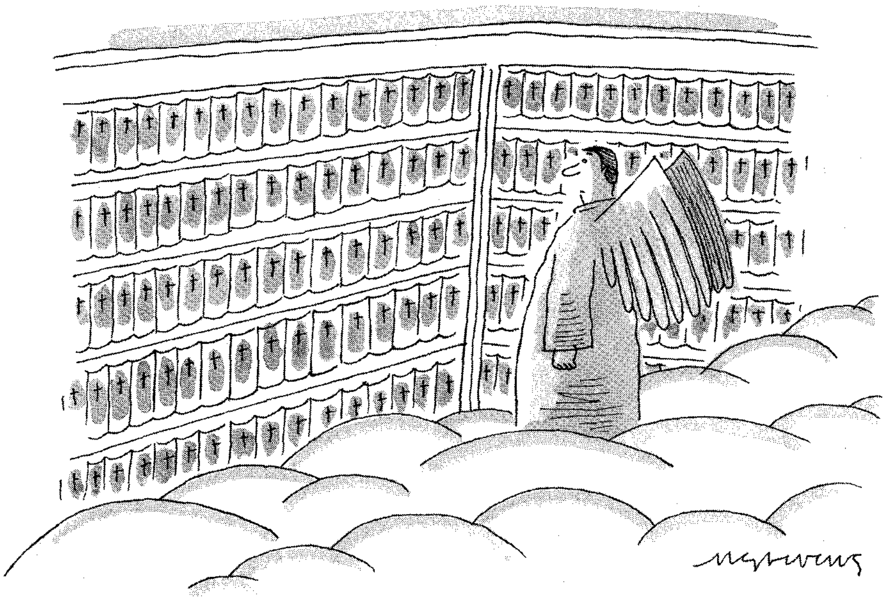

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During his gubernatorial campaign, Long had made two major promises. The first was to provide free textbooks for schoolchildren, the second to build more roads. The chronically underfinanced Louisiana state government had no money for either. To pay for the textbooks, Long first proposed increasing the severance tax on oil, timber, and sulfur. The increase was challenged on technical grounds, and was ultimately rejected by the United States Supreme Court. Long's response to this setback was to raise the stakes. ("Always take the offensive," he once advised. "The defensive ain't worth a damn.") He proposed a new oil-processing tax, most of the proceeds of which would come from Standard Oil, whose refinery in Baton Rouge was one of the largest in the world. Standard Oil fought back the best way it knew how: according to one state representative, the company offered as much as twenty thousand dollars per vote. After the oil-processing tax was defeated in the legislature, Long—not unreasonably—accused lawmakers of having been "bought." By this point, even many representatives who had been inclined to support him had grown weary of his tactics. And so, just eleven months after taking office, Long found himself facing impeachment.

The charges brought against Long ranged from illegally influencing the judiciary and misusing state funds to engaging in immoral conduct and using foul language. (Witnesses at the impeachment hearings included a hula dancer who testified that one night she saw the Governor acting "very frisky" and a prominent Caddo Parish merchant who recalled Long's referring to one newspaper editor as a "shitass.") Long portrayed the battle as being between him and his old nemesis; one flyer he had printed—and delivered at state expense—was titled "The Cross of Gold: Standard Oil Company vs. Huey P. Long." The Louisiana House voted to impeach on eight counts, but Long was able to win over just enough senators to avoid conviction. Most of those senators were soon rewarded with lucrative state jobs.

There are two schools of thought on how the hearings affected Long. One has it that he was unmoored by the ordeal, the other that the experience only aggravated his native ruthlessness. In either case, whatever constraints he might once have felt dissolved. Long took to demanding kickbacks of twenty per cent from all businesses that won state contracts; the proceeds went toward financing his political operation and publishing his newspaper, which was largely dedicated to attacking the state's other broadsheets. The Depression hit, and government jobs became increasingly valuable. Long kept adding positions—bridge tenders, game wardens, highway workers—and these, of course, went only to loyalists. In June, 1930, three hundred of

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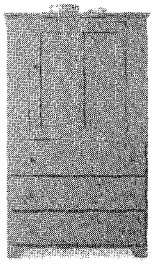

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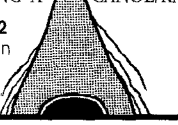

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his most committed foes formed the Constitutional League, devoted to preventing "Governor Huey P. Long from treating the organic law of the state as a scrap of paper." The league soon published a list of twenty-three of the Governor's relatives who were on the state payroll. Long mockingly referred to the group as "the Constipational League."

When Long won the U.S. Senate race, in the fall of 1930, it was clear that further resistance would be futile. The Old Regulars sued for peace; Long granted it to them on the condition that they turn over most of their apparatus to him. ("It has been my good fortune to have blind men like these in politics," he wrote of the Old Regulars. "They cannot see something after it has passed over them, and they have been knocked down by it a half-dozen times.") The national press saw Long as comical but also, increasingly, as threatening. Katherine Anne Porter called him "the worst sort of fascist demagogue." H. L. Mencken described him as a "backwoods demagogue of the oldest and most familiar model—impudent, blackguardly, and infinitely prehensile."

It was around this time that Long acquired the nickname the Kingfish, after the smooth-talking schemer on the radio show "Amos 'n Andy." Long was so taken by the name that he began to use it himself, answering the telephone, "This is the Kingfish!"

Long waited for more than a year after winning his Senate seat before showing up in Washington to claim it. (He had had a bitter falling-out with his lieutenant governor, and so was reluctant to leave Louisiana until he had installed his successor, the aptly named O. K. Allen.) He arrived in the capital in January, 1932, and, following much the same script he had when he joined the Railroad Commission, immediately proceeded to challenge the established order. He proposed a sixty-five-per-cent tax rate on incomes of more than two million dollars, then, to emphasize the point, held up Senate debates with solo filibusters. "I am beginning to be convinced by the logic of my own argument," he declared during one three-hour tirade. He was—or claimed to be—particularly incensed with the Senate's Democratic leader, Joe Robinson, of Arkansas, whom he labelled a corporate stooge. Long demanded Robinson's ouster as minority leader, and when this demand was ignored he resigned his committee assignments in protest. Robinson dismissed Long's theatrics as "comic opera," but they produced what was clearly the desired effect. Word of Long's performances began to spread, and by May the Washington *Post* was calling for him to resign. Among those who came to listen to Long soliloquize was a young congressional aide named Lyndon Johnson. "I was simply entranced," Johnson later recalled.

In June, 1932, the Democrats met in Chicago to choose their Presidential candidate. Long backed Franklin Roosevelt, and he worked hard to deliver not only Louisiana's delegation but also Mississippi's and Arkansas's to the New York governor. F.D.R. elaborately courted Long; the Kingfish was a guest at Hyde Park, where his plaid suit and pink tie made a big impression. ("Who is that *awful* man?" Roosevelt's mother, Sarah, asked in horror.) But F.D.R., however much he relied on Long, never trusted him. "We have to remember all the time that he really is one of the two most dangerous men in the country," Roosevelt told one of his advisers shortly after the convention. (The other was Douglas MacArthur.)

The following spring, Long introduced what he called "the Long Plan" for "Redistribution of Wealth." To push the plan, he formed a group, the Share Our Wealth Society, which took as its slogan "Every Man a King." Long claimed that he had come up with a way to provide each family in the United States with five thousand dollars, or enough money "for a home, an automobile, a radio, and the ordinary conveniences." In reality, Long's plan—to the extent that it existed at all—was made up of a series of tax proposals, with no provision to distribute the proceeds, and the numbers never came close to adding up. (One economist calculated that, in order to provide just fourteen hundred dollars to every needy family, the government would have to impose a tax rate of a hundred per cent on all income above four thousand dollars.) Critics condemned Share Our Wealth as false hope for the poor—"This is not water for the thirsty, but a mirage," Walter Lippmann wrote—but the poor apparently were not dissuaded. Share Our Wealth clubs began to spring up in other states, mostly in the South, but also in New York and California. In late 1934, the society boasted more than three million members. To manage Share Our Wealth, Long hired a charismatic young clergyman named Gerald L. K. Smith, whom Mencken described as "the champion boob-bumper of all epochs." Smith was a virulent anti-Semite and an avowed Roosevelt-hater. "We're going to get that cripple out of the White House," he promised.

By this point, Roosevelt and Long were openly at war. Long accused F.D.R. of caring only about the rich: "So it has been that while people have begged for meat and bread, Mr. Roosevelt's administration has sailed merrily along, plowing under and destroying the things to eat and wear." Out of spite, it seems, Long blocked a hundred-million-dollar appropriations bill that the Administration was pushing to finance benefits for crippled children and pensioners. Looking to 1936, Long expected the President to lose to a Republican. Then, in 1940, the nation would be ready to turn to the Kingfish.

Roosevelt, for his part, seems to have decided that the only way to deal with Long was to destroy him. First, he denied him a say over federal patronage in Louisiana. When this failed to have much impact, the F.B.I., at the Administration's behest, sent thirty-two agents to Louisiana.

All the while, Long maintained his grip on politics back home. Whenever he returned to Baton Rouge, O. K. Allen would, quite literally, vacate the governor's office. On more than one occasion, when things threatened to go against him, Long had Allen impose martial law. A novel strategy Long devised for pushing his agenda through the state legislature involved attaching amendments to pending measures on unrelated subjects. In this way, a reorganization of the New Orleans Police Department was slipped into a measure regulating the construction of boathouses on Bayou St. John, and the oil-processing tax that had led to Long's impeachment was tacked on to a measure to codify licensing laws. Long took a cheerfully indulgent view of his unorthodox methods. "I'd much rather get up before the legislature and say, 'Now this is a good law; it's for the benefit of the people, and I'd like for you to vote for it in the interest of the public welfare,'" he asserted. "Only, I know that laws ain't made that way."

The end of any democratic pretense came around the same time that the anti-Long forces openly began to entertain the idea of armed resistance. In July, 1934, Long proposed (and, of course, got passed) a tax on advertising sales by newspapers with a circulation exceeding twenty thousand. The tax affected primarily the large dailies in New Orleans, which had always opposed him. (Long called the levy a "tax on lying.") The following month, he summoned the legislature into special session and presented lawmakers with thirty bills, many of which he had drafted himself. One authorized the Governor to call out the state militia at his own discretion and prohibited the courts

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from issuing writs to block the Governor from using this new authority. All the measures were approved within three days. Three months later, Long called another special session; as the bills sailed through, one disgruntled lawmaker demanded to know when legislators would have a chance to read them. "When they are passed," Long replied. The special sessions kept coming, and executive—which is to say Long's—power kept increasing. At one point, Long went so far as to stand in for an absent legislator and cast his vote, and none of the lawmaker's colleagues even bothered to object.

On September 8, 1935, Long drove to Baton Rouge from New Orleans to preside over yet another special session. Just the day before, White says, federal authorities had decided to seek an indictment against him on charges of tax evasion, but Long was unaware of this. Although it was a Sunday, he kept the legislature working well into the evening. At around nine-thirty that night, as he was walking toward the governor's office, a man wearing a white linen suit stepped out from behind a pillar. According to the most widely accepted version of events, the man in the linen suit—a doctor named Carl Weiss—shot Long in order to defend his wife's honor. (Long had been spreading a rumor that the woman's family, which included a prominent judge, wasn't white but had "coffee blood.") According to an alternative version of events, Weiss merely confronted Long, and it was the Senator's trigger-happy bodyguards who actually shot him. (Weiss was killed instantly in a shower of bullets.) Long was rushed to Our Lady of the Lake Hospital, where a physician he had installed a few years earlier was in charge. The physician botched the surgery, and two days later Long was dead. Such was the power of the Kingfish legend that even the assassination couldn't put an end to it. In 1938, the sociologist Gunnar Myrdal found that some schoolchildren in the poorer districts of northern Louisiana believed that Long was still alive and, what's more, residing in the White House.

In the decades since, Louisiana politics have alternated between periods of anti-Long reformism and much longer periods of neo-Longian high jinks. Richard Leche, who was elected governor the year after Long's death, once reportedly said, "When I took the oath of office, I didn't take any vow of poverty"; he was convicted on federal mail-fraud charges and spent five years in prison. Long's younger brother, Earl, was elected governor in 1948 and again in 1956; at one point, after Earl delivered an obscenity-laced speech on statewide TV, his wife, Blanche, had him committed to a state hospital for the insane. (Earl managed to get himself released by firing the hospital's superintendent.) Between 1972 and 1996, Edwin Edwards served an unprecedented four full terms as Louisiana's governor, in the process perfecting a style that the political scientist Wayne Parent has dubbed "made-for-TV Longism." Edwards favored pretty women, fast living, and high-stakes gambling. He also seems to have been fond of extortion, and three times was tried on federal racketeering charges. During his final gubernatorial campaign, against the former Klansman David Duke, pro-Edwards campaign stickers exhorted, "Vote for the Crook. It's Important."

Such slackness has many well-documented costs; Louisiana routinely ranks at or near the bottom on measures like high-school graduation rates, and near the top when it comes to measures like infant-mortality and murder rates. Hurricane Katrina, certainly, has turned out to be almost as much a political as a natural disaster. One of the first things that Louisiana's U.S. senators did afterward was to squander their colleagues' sympathy: the proposed Louisiana Katrina Reconstruction Act, a two-hundred-and-fifty-billion-dollar relief package written largely by lobbyists, was crammed with pork-barrel projects that, if completed, would have *increased* the state's vulnerability to future storms. Under the headline "IN LOUISIANA, GRAFT INQUIRIES ARE INCREASING," the *Times* recently reported that new investigations into post-Katrina fraud are being opened almost daily. In an unrelated scandal that prompted an extraordinary F.B.I. raid on his congressional offices last month, one of New Orleans's congressmen, William Jefferson, has been at the center of a bribery investigation involving telecommunications contracts in Africa. Perhaps out of this wreckage the state will reinvent its political culture, but at this point it's hard to see how. "Someday Louisiana is going to get 'good government,' " Earl Long once declared. "And when they do, they ain't going to like it." ◆

BRIEFLY NOTED

The Secret River, *by Kate Grenville (Canongate; $24).* On his first night in New South Wales, in 1806, William Thornhill—Thames boatman, thief, banished convict—gazes despairingly into the forest outside his flimsy hut. A spear-wielding Aborigine appears before him, and his dejection turns to rage. All he has is his family—"those soft parcels of flesh," sleeping behind him—and "the dirt under his bare feet, his small grip on this unknown place," and he is not about to give them up to a naked black stranger. The Aborigine responds with equal vehemence: "Be off, be off!" The episode shows, in miniature, the project of Grenville's magnificent novel—an unflinching exploration of modern Australia's origins. Like the settlers, we instinctively turn away from the ugly truths behind every cleared riverbank and every posted fence. But Grenville's psychological acuity, and the sheer gorgeousness of her descriptions of the territory being fought over, pulls us ever deeper into a time when one community's opportunity spelled another's doom.

Londonstani, *by Gautam Malkani (Penguin; $24.95).* London's second-generation Asians are given the "Trainspotting" treatment in this slang-driven first novel, about four "desis" ("our own word for homeboy") who fight and preen in the backwater borough of Hounslow. Jas, the teen-age narrator, was a "dickless khota" before being taken under the muscled wing of the self-styled gangsta Hardjit, and his painstaking efforts to emulate his cohorts' "rudeboy finesse" are related in illuminating detail: facial hair should look "drawn on with a felt-tip pen" and riding in a Beemer requires staring "out the window like some big dumb dog with a big slobbery tongue." The incessant blend of boyish patois and text-message speak ("we had 2 call Davinder b4 we left dis place, innit") is captivating, but the plot becomes overwrought and absurd when the boys stumble into the world of high-stakes crime.

Spalding's World Tour, *by Mark Lamster (Public Affairs; $26).* In the late nineteenth century, Albert Spalding, a sporting-goods magnate and former baseball star, decided to improve business by anointing himself ambassador for baseball and taking two teams of professional players on a six-month world tour. He brought along sideshow attractions, including an aerialist who hung on a trapeze from a hot-air balloon before the game, and he paid a prominent journalist to lend his support in print. Spalding's success is debatable; spectators in Britain, for instance, were hard-pressed to follow the action and declared the game a knockoff of rounders. Spalding's jaunt was an early example of the globalization of sports (the Olympics weren't far behind), but Lamster's history, while thorough and detailed, doesn't substantively address what its reception might have suggested about overseas attitudes toward America's burgeoning cultural clout.

Tamerlane, *by Justin Marozzi (Da Capo; $26.95).* This revisionist history traces the rise of the fourteenth-century warlord Temur—known in the West as Tamerlane—from a crippled peasant boy wandering the steppe to ruler of half the known world. Marozzi asserts that while Temur, like Genghis Kahn, specialized in razing cities and slaughtering their inhabitants, he also had the wisdom to rebuild, and Islamic art and architecture flourished on his watch. Marozzi quotes widely from contemporaneous accounts, relishing the fantastical detail. In India, for example, Temur countered the armored elephants of Delhi with "roaring camels on fire," then had the defeated beasts brought before him and forced to kneel. Along the way, Marozzi makes a pilgrimage through Temur's former empire, and argues that the Soviets outdid the warlord in destruction by turning the once fertile basin of Central Asia into a dust bowl.

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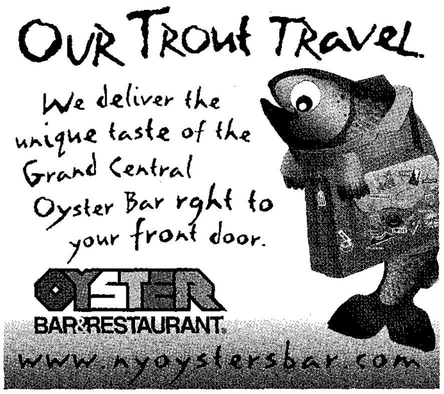

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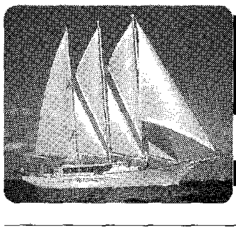

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MUSICAL EVENTS

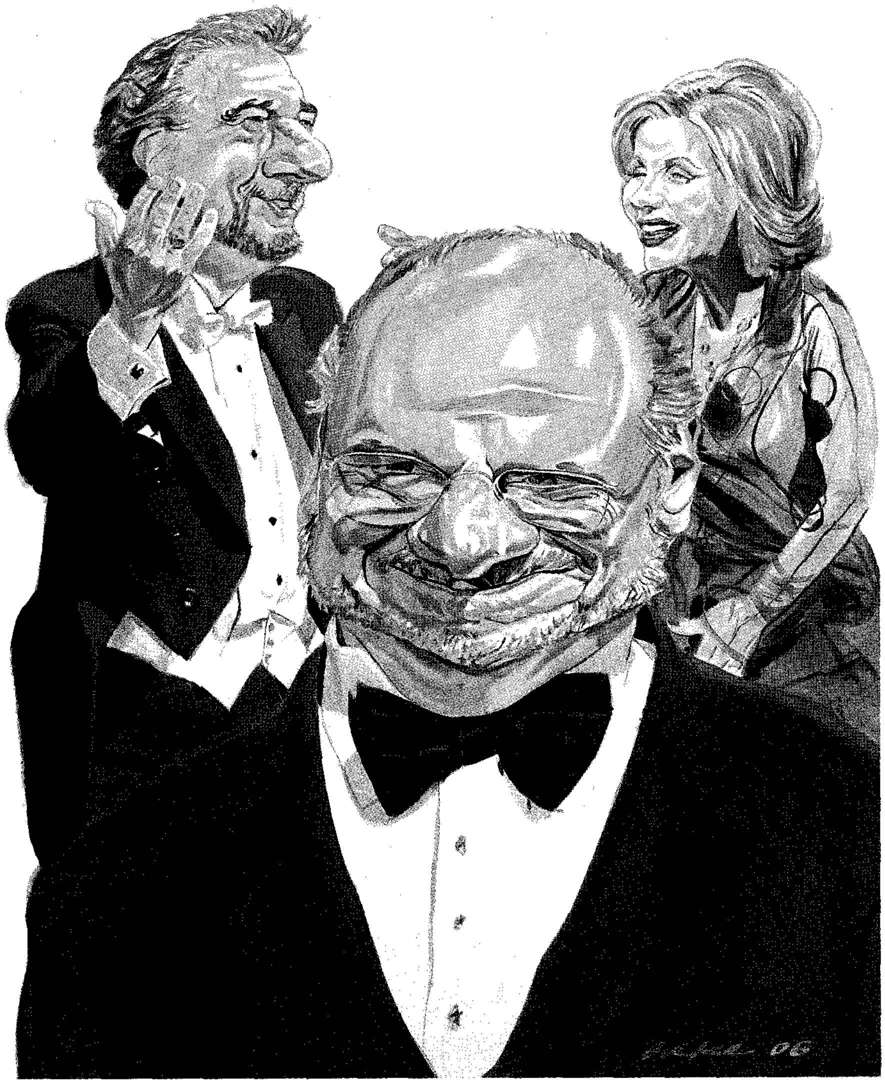
DIVA PARADE

The Met's end-of-season gala.

BY ALEX ROSS

The Metropolitan Opera season lumbered to a close with a gala in honor of Joseph Volpe, who is completing his term as the general manager of the house. With its mixture of bedazzling vocalism and befuddling lapses of taste, the event captured in microcosm—if a five-hour evening can be called a microcosm—the artistic vagaries of Volpe's tenure at the Met. It also offered up opera in raw, pure form, its theatricality stripped away and its complexity minimized. Vocal jamborees of this kind have the appeal of a tribal ritual: favorite singers parade across the stage, and fans respond with ovations of minutely graded intensity. PBS broadcast the gala on June 1st, but, in a perfect world, it would have played on Fox, with explosive graphics, yammering commentators, and an atmosphere of gladiatorial bloodlust.

During the not infrequent lulls in the program, I got to thinking about opera's odd position in American culture. Although the art is hardly popular, styles of singing that are described as "operatic" are integral to the pop mainstream. Andrea Bocelli and Josh Groban sing to millions, purveying a hybrid genre that has been dubbed "popera." Simon Cowell, the acidulous producer turned music critic who dominates the hit show "American Idol," has organized an act called Il Divo, in which trained opera singers bleat pop tunes. Cowell's projects have succeeded in making America sound like a gaggle of opera queens: at water coolers and barbecues across the U.S. of A., people chastise singers for waywardness of pitch (or "pitchiness," in "American Idol" lingo), weigh the relative importance of technical precision and expressive force, and indulge in other forms of intermission second-guessing. There was a curious moment during this year's "Idol" auditions when a young woman named Heidi Fairbanks came out singing "Caro nome," and not badly, either. She was sent home, but she sounded less out of place than you might expect.



The five-hour event captured the artistic vagaries of Joseph Volpe's tenure.

PHILIP BURKE

For a long while, during the macho decades of rock and rap, it seemed as though vocal floridity had been drummed out of pop music. But it turns out that there is an abiding hunger in the heartland for high notes, melisma, fioritura, and the rest. So why don't more people warm to the grand original? One problem is that there is no way of capturing opera's elemental thrill on television, or even on a recording. To hear a great singer such as Karita Mattila throw the emotion in her voice across the hundred and eighty-five feet that separates the middle of the Met stage from the back row of the Family Circle is not an experience that can be reduced to digital bytes. This is part of the reason that opera remains an open secret, at once ubiquitous and unknown. There is also the issue of opera's obsession with the past, where most people understandably do not want to live. None of the arias that were sung at the Volpe gala were written after 1936, four years before the outgoing general manager was born.

If there was a consensus "winner" at the gala, it was Natalie Dessay, who sang the climactic sleepwalking scene from Bellini's "La Sonnambula." Like most bel-canto showstoppers, it ends

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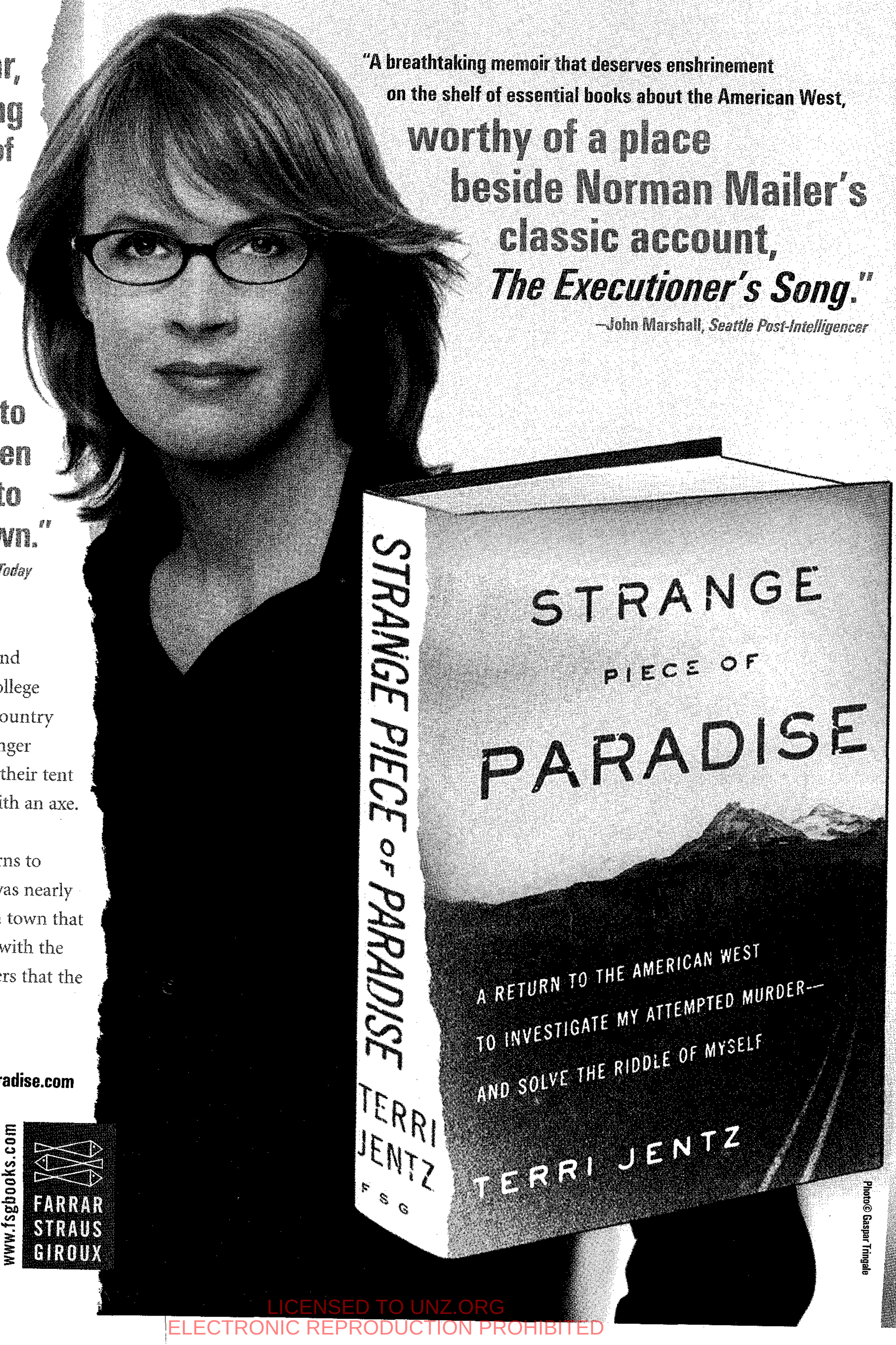
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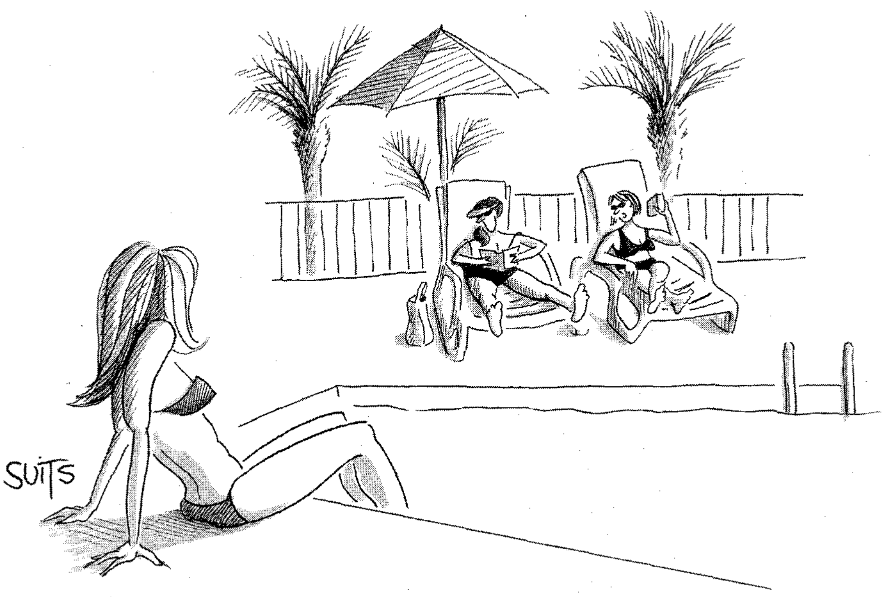


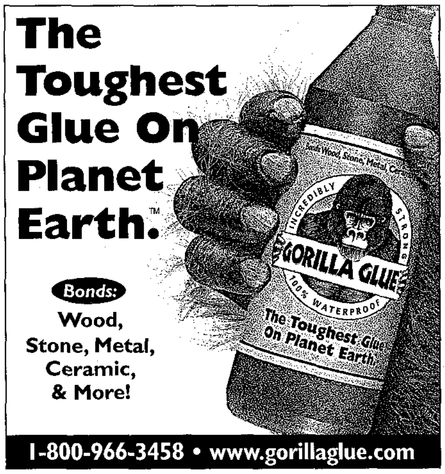
"My brain could kick her brain's butt."

• •

with rapid runs and brilliant high notes, which Dessay dispatched with ease. But the true magic came in the slow aria "Ah! non credea," in which Amina sings to a withered flower in her hand, and enters into a lingering duet with a lone cello. Dessay sang it as if with one breath, unfurling a long, luminous ribbon of tone. This singer has experienced difficulties in the past few years, having had operations on both of her vocal cords. If her voice no longer sounds as effortless as it did nine years ago, when she had her first major success on the Met stage, as Zerbinetta in "Ariadne auf Naxos," she has compensated by finding a darker, richer vein of feeling. It was almost disconcerting how good she was; you forgot that you were at a gala, and were absorbed into Amina's dream world.

The fun of a first-rate gala is in seeing stars goad one another into tasteful excess. A trio of deep-voiced singers in the second part of the program—Dmitri Hvorostovsky, René Pape, and Dolora Zajick—engaged in a friendly fight to see who could sustain the longest line at the slowest tempo. Hvorostovsky gave a surreally robust account of Rodrigo's death scene from "Don Carlo." Pape tested the upper edges of his magnificent bass voice in King Philip's Act IV lament from the same opera. Zajick produced what may have been the most decibels of the evening in "O mon Fernand," from Donizetti's "La Favorite." For glamour made visible and audible, none could rival the majestic Mattila, in "Vilja," from "The Merry Widow," although Renée Fleming came close in a finely nuanced "Tacea la notte placida," from "Il Trovatore."

If the entire evening had gone like that, it might have been quasi-legendary. But, alas, I have left several hours unaccounted for. Having wasted a small but not insignificant portion of my life at last season's new production of Franco Alfano's "Cyrano de Bergerac," I hoped never to encounter that puddle of late-Romantic mediocrity again, but Plácido Domingo, at whose bidding the opera was disinterred, apparently insisted on bringing it back once more. This time, the great tenor conducted an aria, "Je jette avec grâce mon feutre," which his putative successor Roberto Alagna sang; they were, respectively, stiff-armed and dry-voiced. Earlier, Domingo came onstage to sing the kitschy Spanish tune "Granada"; for Volpe, "That's Amore" might have been a better choice. Deborah Voigt, Kiri Te Kanawa, Frederica von Stade, Waltraud Meier, Olga Borodina, Susan Graham, Stephanie Blythe, Denyce Graves, Ben Heppner, Juan Diego Flórez, Thomas Hampson, James Morris, and Samuel Ramey also made appearances.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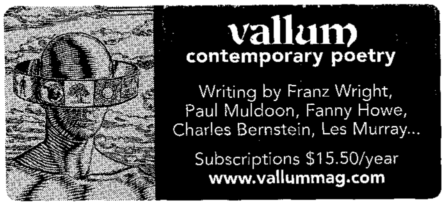
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The singers performed in front of sets from "Ariadne auf Naxos," "La Traviata," and "Die Fledermaus." There was something vaguely avant-garde about the effect of seeing, say, Morris intone "Die Frist ist um," the phantom mariner's soliloquy in "The Flying Dutchman," while standing in the middle of the ornate parlor set from Franco Zeffirelli's version of "La Traviata." Peter Gelb, the next general manager, has promised to modernize the Met's productions, and it occurred to me, during another of the evening's lulls, that Gelb could make a quick start by taking stuffy old productions and staging the wrong operas on top of them. For example, Zeffirelli's picture-postcard "La Bohème" could be used as a backdrop for the bloody nightmare of "Elektra." Or "Fledermaus" could be staged amid the peaks and crevasses of the "Ring." The possibilities are endless, and it wouldn't cost a cent.

Volpe took a couple of solo bows at the end of the evening. It was touching to see the Met's brusque boss looking a bit awkward and overwhelmed. Volpe has written, with the help of Charles Michener, a lively memoir of his years at the Met, where he started out as a carpenter. Much has been made of his tough-talking, streetwise persona, which ruffled feathers at the hoity-toity house. In fact, as the memoir reveals, he had a well-to-do upbringing in Glen Cove. (You could have deduced as much from the tony home movies of his childhood, which were shown during the gala.) Despite his gruff exterior, Volpe had just the right touch to maintain the Met's traditions. Production values remained luxurious. Casting was done according to the star system. Despite a few innovations and renovations, there were no seismic changes. Although I'm one of those who believe that the Met is in dire need of new ideas, I am also savoring every glimpse of those towering, opulent, meticulous sets, knowing that, in a decade, they will probably be gone. ♦

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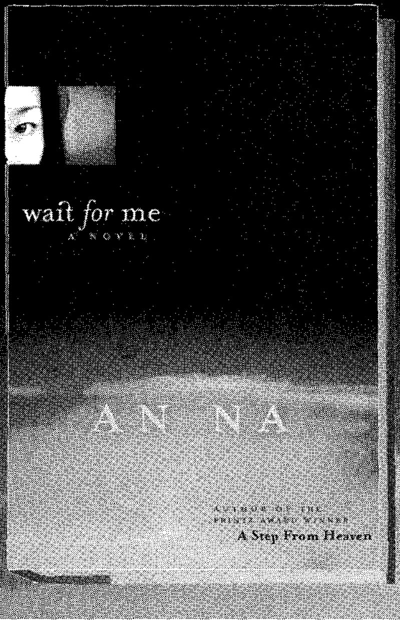

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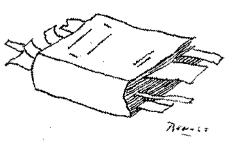

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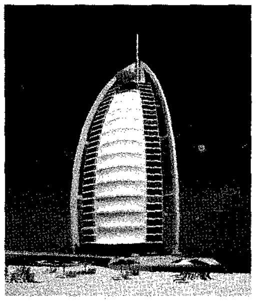

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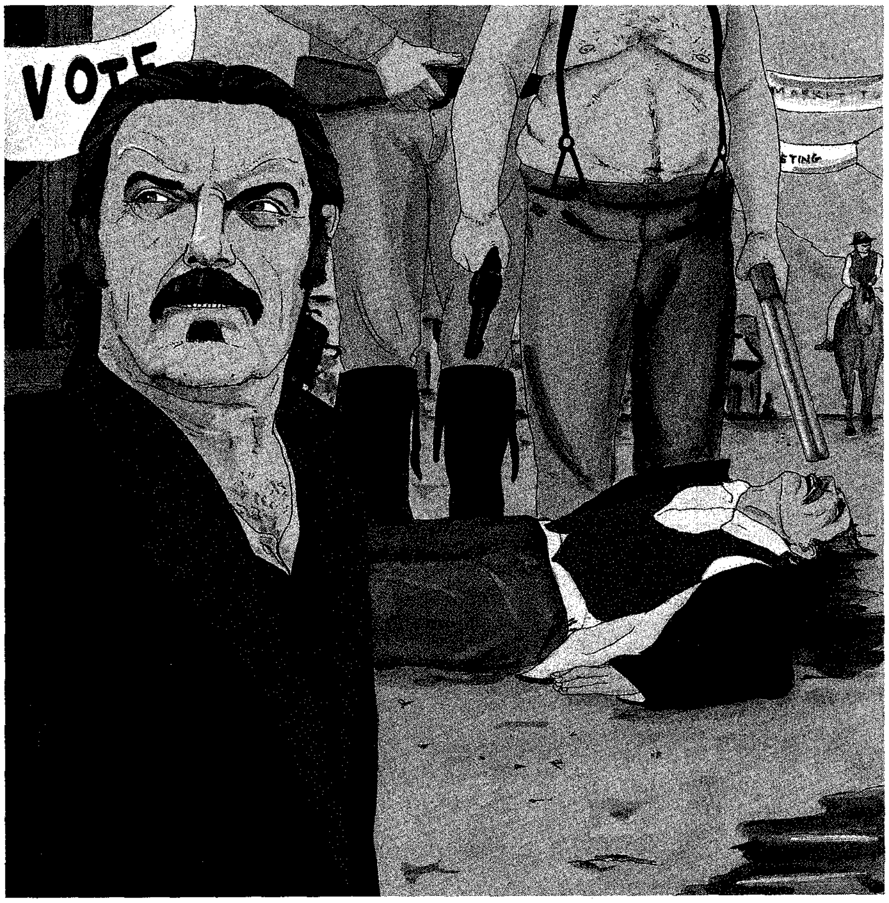
ON TELEVISION

DEAD ON

David Milch explores the Dakota Territory.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

It has been many years since Westerns were essentially black-and-white, cut-and-dried stories of good versus evil: morality tales with lots of horses and guns and one of everything else—a sheriff, an outlaw, an embattled hero, a town drunk, a whore with a heart of gold, a honky-tonk piano, and a schoolteacher from Illinois, who found out shortly after arriving in town that, for worse and for better, there was more to life than book learnin'. Indians were, for the most part, the obstacle that had to be overcome—although sometimes there was a "good one." Although Westerns have evolved, the conventions are still often glaring, making even Westerns that have gray, shadowy moral areas a tough sell to some people. There's just too much dust, leather, whinnying, shooting, and mud—too much *brown*—and not enough talking, understanding, humor, and complexity. The trappings of Westerns make them seem fake and message-y, even as they strain to be realistic. David Milch's "Deadwood," which begins its third season on HBO on Sunday, is the exception to the rule; in what I'd assumed was very poor soil, he's produced a gorgeously living thing.



Ian McShane as Al Swearengen, "Deadwood" 's murderous, magnetic saloonkeeper.

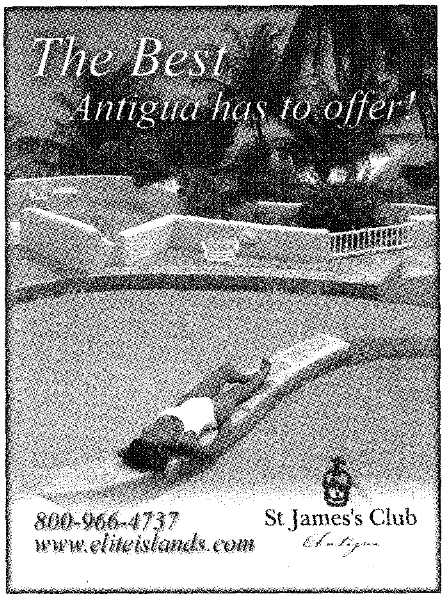
LARA TOMLIN

"Deadwood" is set, of course, in Deadwood, in the Dakota Territory. It begins in 1876, when the settlement was just a few buildings in the crease between two hills, lining the sides of a muddy street, there to meet the needs of the men who flocked to the Black Hills after gold was discovered in the area. The settlement is so small that your eye can take in the whole town at a glance; in a sense, viewers have the same perspective as Al Swearengen (Ian McShane), the saloonkeeper and power broker of the camp, who conducts much of his business from his second-story quarters, above the bar, but often goes out on his balcony to observe the goings on in town below. Over the first two seasons, we have watched Deadwood grow—the real Deadwood went from being a cluster of prospectors to a roiling community in less than a year. In the show, the cemetery expands; bigger, louder equipment is brought in to get at the gold deep underground; more prostitutes are shipped in. Seeing America being built in this way, we see what it is made of. Men are constantly digging, hauling, and hammering, and the desire, hard work, and risk that it took to create this place are always front and center. "Deadwood" takes you past the familiar cardboard cutouts of Wild Bill Hickok, Calamity Jane, and "the Old West," and acquaints you with the real forces and peoples that converged to form our country.

Milch, who co-created "NYPD Blue," with Steven Bochco, has a deep understanding of tortured souls and a gift for depicting the ways in which people are torn apart and come together. You never feel as though he were imposing a contemporary outlook onto the past in order to make his drama more "relatable"; instead, he shows how the past still lives in us. It's obvious that serious research went into "Deadwood," but, as Milch says, he learned as much as he could and then threw out most of what he knew when he began writing the show. "Deadwood" draws on history without being slavishly beholden to the facts; it smells and sounds right, and every aspect of the luxuriant production contributes to that sense: the costumes and sets seem to have perfectly calibrated levels of wear and tear. There are at least a dozen sensational performances, among them Keith Carradine as Hickok; Dayton Callie as his sidekick, Charlie Utter; Robin Weigert as Calamity Jane; Jeffrey Jones as the nosy newspaper publisher A. W. Merrick; Paula Malcomson as Trixie, a prostitute with higher aspirations; and Geri Jewell as Jewel, Swearengen's crippled maid. Ian McShane's Swearengen is a murderer, a monster, a clever beast you cannot help being drawn to; he wears a pinstriped suit over long johns, which emphasizes his hugely thick neck and his large head—he's an unstoppable wall of man coming at you, episode after episode (except when he is pitiably felled, temporarily, by a kidney stone). But you don't really notice the casting per se, because you're too engrossed in the characters, listening to what they say, and trying to get inside their heads and hearts.

"Deadwood" has ten or so writers and nearly as many directors, but there is a unity to the dialogue (Milch is one of the executive producers). It is ornate and profane—far beyond, on both counts, anything that's ever been on television. But you never feel that the show's creators have injected the swearing gratuitously. It even has different colors, depending on who's doing it—when Calamity Jane is trying to comfort a little girl whose family has just been hacked to death, by singing "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" to her with Charlie Utter, there's something touching about the way she yells "God damn it!" when he screws up the timing. What I find more brutal than the language is seeing freshly dead bodies fed to the pigs, or people not stopping to help Jewel when she falls in the street. (In the scene, a horse walks by in the foreground, its large, all-seeing eye rebuking human cruelty.) People just go about their business, and their business is making money.

But even making money the Deadwood way is small potatoes compared to the interests that start descending on the town when the stakes get big—one of whom is George Hearst (Gerald McRaney), the father of William Randolph Hearst, whose arrival signals the beginning of strong-arm capitalism. It remains to be seen whether, in season three, Swearengen and his cohorts will adapt to the new ways. What we surely won't see is Deadwood evolving into what it is today—a tourist trap. "Deadwood" has not been renewed for a fourth season, though there is a slim chance that it will return. Milch is now working on another pilot for HBO, called "John from Cincinnati," which he has described as "surf noir." Sounds iffy, but so did a show about a mafioso who goes to a psychiatrist. ♦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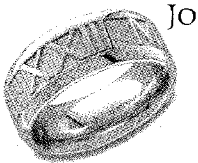
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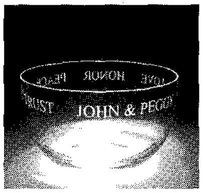
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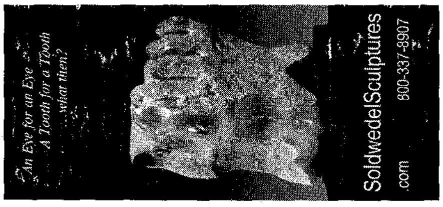
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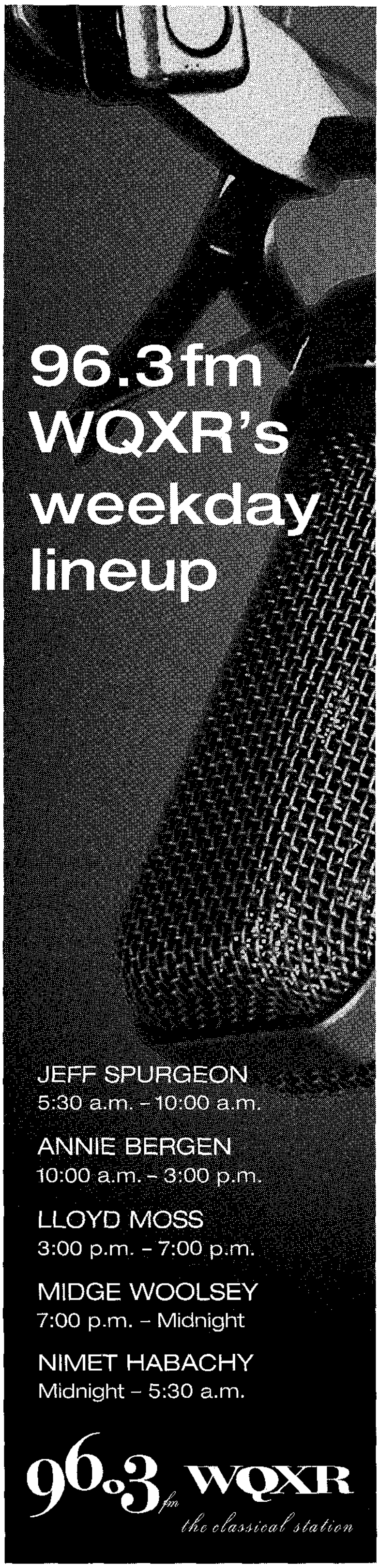

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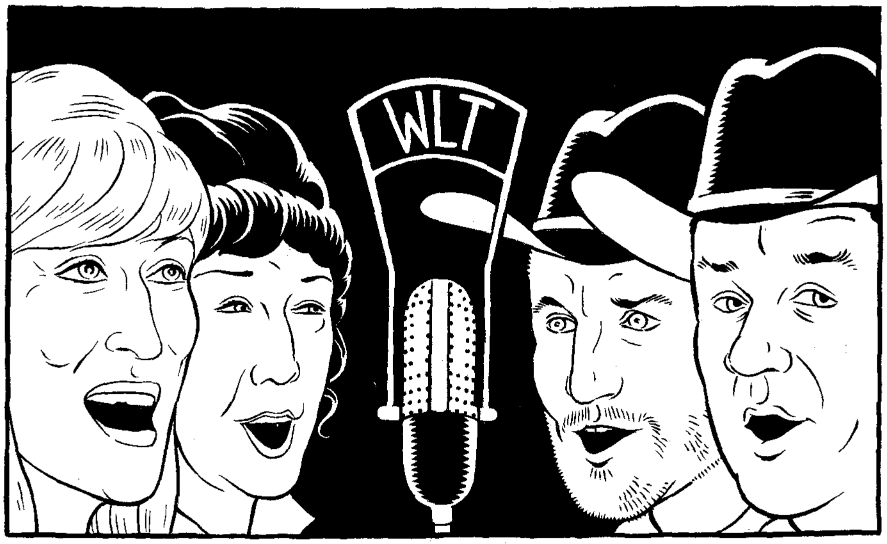
THE CURRENT CINEMA

TUNING IN

"A Prairie Home Companion" and "An Inconvenient Truth."

BY DAVID DENBY

Robert Altman, the protean and ageless movie director, and Garrison Keillor, the creator of and chief performer on the incomparable public-radio variety show "A Prairie Home Companion," have collaborated on a movie based on that show, and it suddenly seems obvious that the two men have much in common. Both are Midwesterners, and they share habits of offhandedness, a natural ease and fluency, and a glancing but prickly humor that moves inexorably toward melancholy satire. Altman has his smooth-flowing sequences in which the camera picks up a character, drops him, picks him up again, and then moves on to other characters caught in the middle of some chewed-over dispute or tangled reminiscence. Keillor, a master of colloquial natter, glides through his tall tales and bits of mockery and sentiment, weaving a gracious patter of commentary around the show's musical performers—his connecting chat is the equivalent of Altman's camera. Neither of them works up a sweat, or, at least, they won't allow anyone to see them working up a sweat. In many ways, they are perfectly mated—perhaps too perfectly, for it turns out that a bit of tension might have helped this movie. "A Prairie Home Companion" has many lovely and funny moments, but there's not a lot going on. Dramatically, it's mellow to the point of inertia. There may not be any sweat, but there isn't any heat, either.



Meryl Streep, Lily Tomlin, Woody Harrelson, and John C. Reilly.

GRANT SHAFFER

What we see is not exactly the show—that is, it's billed not as the actual "Home Companion," the much loved program that has broadcast weekly, before live audiences, for most of the past thirty-two years, but as a local Midwestern show of no great fame. Some wealthy religious Texans have purchased both the show's station and its home—the Fitzgerald Theatre, in St. Paul, Minnesota, where the real "Home Companion" is based—and is closing them down. The movie is devoted to a backstage view of the program's final broadcast. Confusingly, however, the broadcast is not a haphazard amateur production but something very like a typically brilliant episode of "Home Companion," with the addition of some talented movie actors. The movie is narrated by none other than Guy Noir (Kevin Kline), the stumbling, Chandleresque shamus who is the hero of one of Keillor's regular skits. Kline makes him a debonair, pomaded imbecile who can't take a step without hooking his pants pocket on a doorknob, and within minutes we feel that Noir fares much better as a bodiless radio character—he is so thinly conceived here that he hardly exists. He loiters backstage exchanging glances with a mysterious angel of death (Virginia Madsen), a beautiful blonde in a white trenchcoat who makes faintly religious remarks and takes people off to their rest, or something like that. She doesn't quite exist, either.

Keillor definitely exists. Large but soft-shoed, bearish but courtly, he pads around, seemingly befuddled and preoccupied as he entertains his staff with funny stories whose point is that they don't have any point. As the broadcast begins, he snaps into focus. Now he's on top of everything: he sings with the other performers in his light baritone, he rushes through his mock commercials for duct tape and Norwegian milk biscuits, he manages the flow effortlessly. Tom Keith, Keillor's wonderful sound-effects man, is on hand and does his barnyard symphonies and his chunky door-locking noises. Meryl Streep and Lily Tomlin, as sisters in a third-tier family singing act, turn up, both talking at once, spilling bittersweet memories and complaints into each other's words. Streep looks great and sings well, and Lindsay Lohan (nothing wrong with her acting—lay off, everyone) is adorable as her depressive daughter. Woody Harrelson, narrowing his eyes, and John C. Reilly, peepers wide open, play two of Keillor's recurring characters—Dusty and Lefty, cowboys on the trail. Here, they are singing cowboys, with mean, dirty lyrics. The show goes off flawlessly, and Keillor refuses to mourn the end of the program's existence. Streep says to him, "Won't you say something—at least thank the people for listening?" But he's adamant: "Every show is your last show." You do your job right to the end, he insists, without a word of regret—and it feels as if we were sitting in a classroom, absorbing a lesson in proper behavior.

As a collection of performances and as a loving catalogue of radio-production lore, the movie is a triumph. But the dramatic framework (Keillor and Ken LaZebnik wrote the story, Keillor the script) is naïve and tired. We've all seen the last roundup, the last picture show, the last bank heist, the last tango. Taking the anguish out of that story does less to redeem it than to deflate it, and we wonder at the need for this conceit of termination in the first place. Late in the broadcast, a representative of the Texas Christians, whom everyone calls Axeman (Tommy Lee Jones), shows up. Axeman says that the show is out of date. He says *what*? As everyone knows, the out-of-dateness of "Home Companion" is its glory. The program harks back to the kind of variety shows that were a staple of popular entertainment in the nineteen-thirties and forties. After dinner, as you were digesting your mashed potatoes, you got some music, some comedy, some wisdom, and then lights-out and off to bed. Keillor's program pays homage to the soothing, corny-smart routines of those shows. At the same time, it has an edge of contemporary awareness and a gently persistent wit. A quiet reproof to the grasping commercial media and to the spirit of what's-in-it-for-me, the program draws on the spiritual modesty and decency of a near-vanished Midwestern progressive liberalism in which communities take care of their own; the show itself is an example of those communal strengths. Few programs have been better appreciated for their virtues, so it's hard to understand why Keillor promotes this self-pitying story of extinction at the hands of religious philistines. Melancholy may be part of his disposition, but one never counted on him for paranoia. Emotionally, the movie is a queasy and unsatisfying experience. Texas Christians may have done a lot of damage recently, but the only person who will close down "A Prairie Home Companion" is Garrison Keillor.

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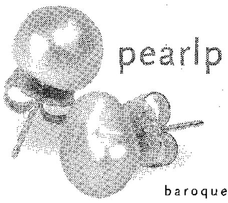
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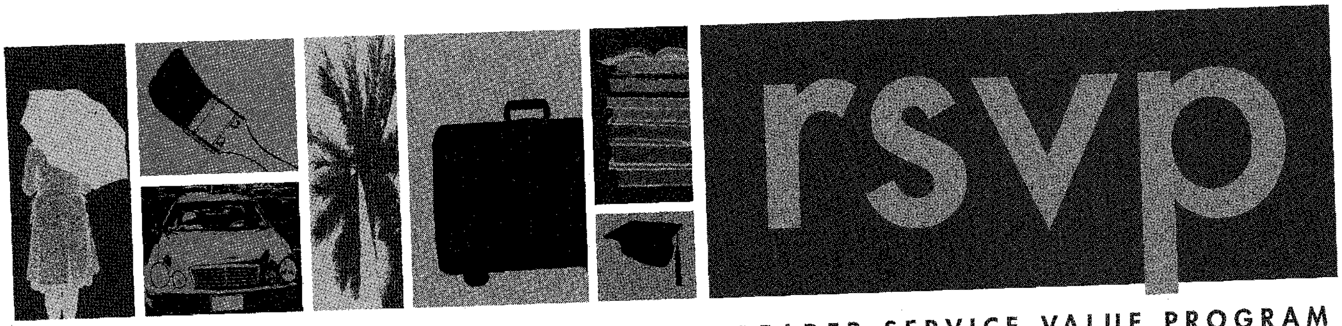

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and then, inevitably, "condescending" and "humorless." Al Gore has been in possession of a major truth about global warming for more than thirty years, and he has suffered the insults of political opponents, the boredom of ironists, and, perhaps most grievously, the routine taunts of a media society which dictates that if you believe in anything too passionately there must be something wrong with you. As many commentators have noticed, there are self-serving elements in "An Inconvenient Truth," the epochal documentary that Gore, with expert Hollywood help (the director is Davis Guggenheim), has put together about his obsession. He appears as the noble-browed warrior of enlightenment, brooding over the ravaged earth and the weakness of man, once or twice too often. He mentions family tragedies, which were moving to me, but which strike some viewers as maudlin notes from a campaign biography. Yet the faults of the movie, semi-excusable as self-vindicating ploys, are nothing compared with its strengths.

For long stretches, Gore is photographed talking before an audience with the aid of slides and charts. There are side trips to fissured ice caps, disappearing glaciers—the snows of yesteryear—and expanses of newly parched and broken terrain. The science is detailed, deep-layered, vivid, and terrifying. Every school, college, and church group, and everyone else beyond the sway of General Motors, ExxonMobil, and the White House should see this movie, and, with luck, they will. It's great propaganda, but there are also passages in which Gore, off camera, speaks in an intimate voice that we've never heard before. He talks about lying beside a river on a lazy summer day—the commonplace idyll of a lone person in a tranquil ecstasy, utterly at home in nature. "An Inconvenient Truth" begins that way, and each time Gore returns to this enraptured mood, after a procession of nightmares and dangers, it has greater resonance. He knows that people find him exasperating, and he has learned to modulate his voice; one has the impression of a complex personality that has gone through loss, humiliation, a cruel breaking down of the ego, and then has reintegrated itself at a higher level. In the movie he is merely excellent. But in person—he is on a speaking tour to promote the movie—he presents a combination of intellectual force, emotional vibrancy, and moral urgency that has hardly been seen in American public life in recent years. It will be interesting to watch how skeptics will deal with Gore's bad news on the environment without making themselves look very small. ♦

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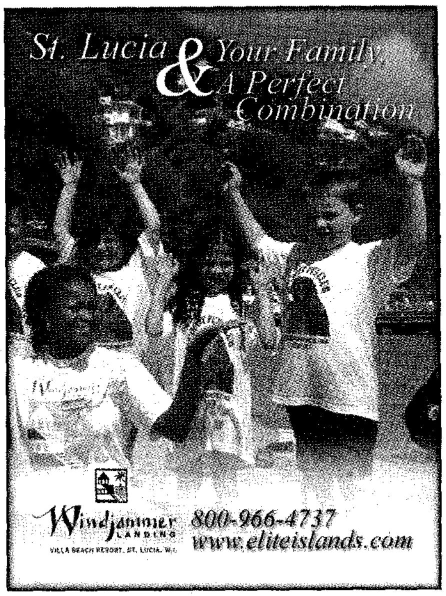
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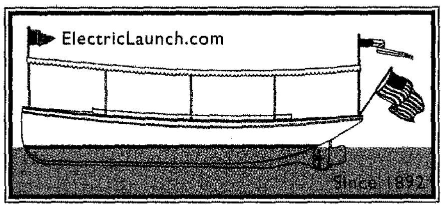
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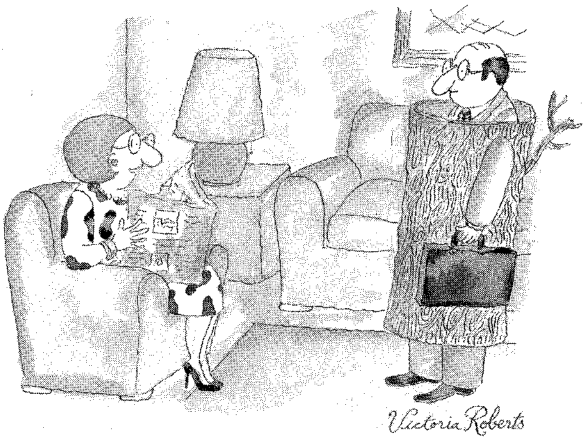
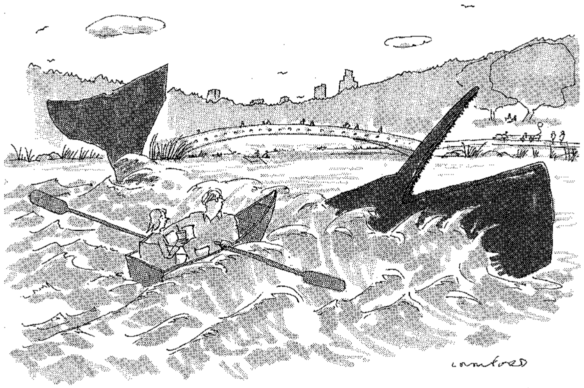
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Gahan Wilson, must be received by Sunday, June 11th. Finalists in the May 29th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the June 26th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"But what if you fall when no one is around?"
Andrew Berlin, New York City



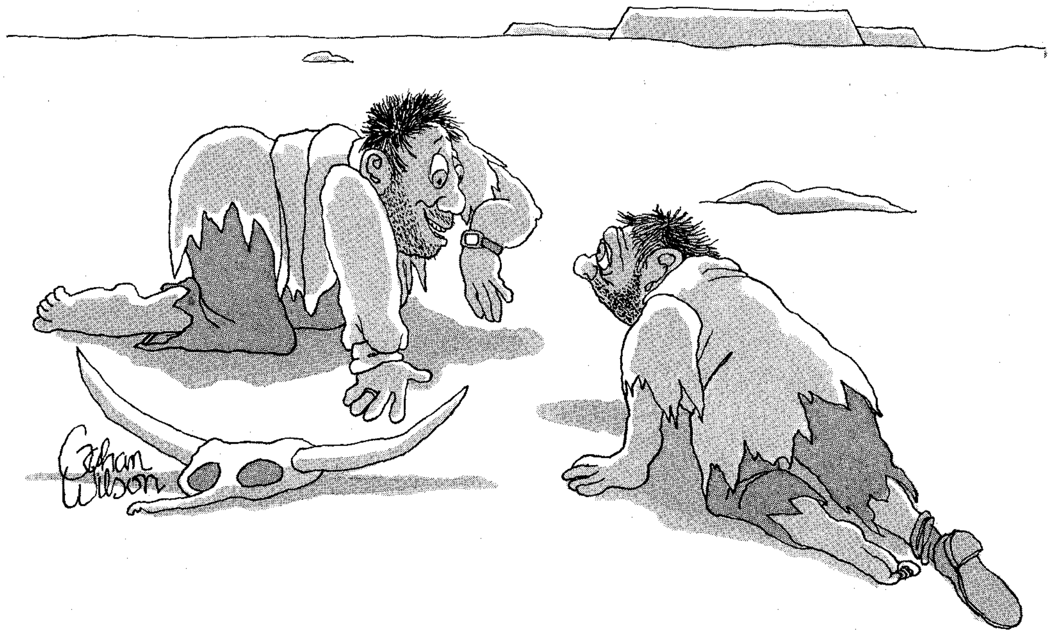
THE FINALISTS

"They're very intelligent, dear. Try reasoning with him."
Mary Gant, La Crescenta, Calif.

"Sure, they're cute when they're little."
Gerry Ringwald, Sherman Oaks, Calif.

"Mind the whale, dear."
Kate Borowske, St. Paul, Minn.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



“ ”

M. Night Shyamalan. ©2006 American Express Company.

My name M. Night Shyamalan

childhood ambition Rubik's Cube champion

fondest memory Kissing my wife in the rain

indulgence Basketball

last purchase Moby Dick

favorite movie The Godfather

inspiration The three black-haired angels that live in my house

My life is about finding time to dream

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